

North East Pensioners Association

Regional IMPACT REPORT on issues affecting pensioners wellbeing in July & August 2022 including: 1. Care Homes & Housing, 2. Economy, 3. Health & Welfare, 4. The NHS, 5. Politics, 6. Poverty, 7. Security and 8. Transport.



1. CARE HOMES/CARERS & HOUSING.

Age UK Care warning. 1.8 million older carers are now dangerously tired and short of support in the wake of the pandemic. The Centre for Better Ageing says two million people who are 65 are living in poverty ([Guardian](#)).



Care homes across the United Kingdom are facing closure. This as soaring energy bills threaten to put them out of business ([Sky NEWS](#)).

Attendance Allowance is worth either £247.40 or £369.60 every four weeks. Apply for Attendance Allowance if you have a disability or illness and need help or supervision throughout the day or at times during the night - even if you don't currently get that help. Its not means tested and wont affect your pension. ([Daily Record](#)).

Staffing crisis leaves many English care home residents' basic needs unmet. Vulnerable people left alone in rooms for 24 hours a day and a night showers for a week as number of vacancies rose to 165,000 ([Guardian](#))

More public toilets campaign. Support [ACORN](#) Newcastle City Centre public Toilet Campaign. Toilets are particularly essential for the elderly, those with disabilities, those with bladder & bowel conditions, those without a home and new parents ([Chronicle](#)).



2. ECONOMY.

Ofgem announced energy price cap will rise by 80%. This takes typical household bills from £1,971 a year to £3,549 a year on 1 October. People will rightly be worried by these price hikes. Unaffordable for households up and down the country. [Click here](#) for the WHICH cost calculator e.g. current DD of £150 per month translates into **£270.09** p/m (Oct-Dec 22) **£409.95** p/m (Jan-Mar 23), **£503.53** p/m (Apr-Jun 23) **£448.79** p/m (Jul-Sep 23) and totals **£4897.08 over 12 months**.

Gigaplant fears. North East factory bosses hit back at claims it is on 'life support' amid cuts. A company spokesperson said "We are progressing ahead of schedule in our enabling works at the Britishvolt Gigasite in Cambois, near Blyth, Northumberland ([Northern Echo](#)). The CEO of British volt coincidentally steps down ([This is Money](#)).



Support Tyne and Wear Fund Pensioners.

They're calling for divestment from Fossil Fuels at a demonstration South Shields Town Hall, 27/09/22 at 12noon. Their Fund invests £238m in companies exploiting greenhouse gases. These members are shifting their pension portion from fossil fuels to a green cause and calling on the Pension Fund to follow suit ([TWFP](#)).

Liz Truss will “crash the public finances”. This if she pursues a huge VAT cut, a leading Institute of Fiscal Studies economist is warning, amid fresh confusion over likely next PM’s plans for the energy crisis ([Independent](#)).

3. HEALTH & WELFARE

Alzheimer’s Research UK has reported: that the Government is honouring its pledge to double dementia research funding. It has also agreed with their proposal for a taskforce, modelled on the COVID-19 Vaccine Taskforce, to hasten the arrival of new treatments ([Alzheimer's Research UK](#)).



Dementia patients not allowed to use toilet. People with dementia left to soil themselves, little help for patients with using the toilet and the prominence of "pad cultures" - giving all patients continence pads, regardless of whether or not they need them...([BBC](#)).

Social care cap that will 'hit the poorest hardest' It comes as the PM has inserted a crucial piece of small print into his cap on care costs that will affect those with less than £186,000 in assets ([Chronicle](#)).

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Overnight home care denied. The family of a terminally-ill Howdon woman are angry that the integrated social care system has decided she no longer requires overnight home care. The 79, was diagnosed with cancer this year after a fall. Previously, she suffered a brain injury following an earlier fall 2021 - which resulted in her being admitted to North Tyneside Hospital under the mental health act ([Chronicle](#)).

4. NHS.

Shortage of GPs. There are simply not enough doctors in the UK, and we are not spending enough on healthcare as a proportion of GDP, given our ageing population. We spend significantly less than France and Germany. Healthwatch reports that 50% of complaints are now about lack of access to care ([Observer](#)).



Waiting lists. A senior NHS leader in the North East has welcomed progress bringing down hospital waiting lists - and explained he thinks virtual appointments for outpatients are the next step to recover backlogs ([Chronicle](#)).

Virtual Appointments. Healthwatch told the Commons Health and Social Care Committee patients are willing to see other primary care staff when appropriate but want to know who is coordinating their care. They said solutions must be found for staffing issues but remote consultations are "not a panacea for everyone" ([D.Express](#)).

Cancer consultations to change in North East due to workforce shortages. They'll have to go to specific hospitals. Lack of cancer specialists has resulted in changes to how patients will have their first treatment consultation. According to a consultant services are experiencing workforce problems. Over the next 5 years there will be a regional shortage of 43% of oncology staff ([Chronicle](#)).

Health Inequality. Four conditions – chronic pain, alcohol problems, COPD and cardiovascular disease account for 83% of the inequality in diagnosed illness between the North East (with highest levels of illness) and the East of England (with lowest levels of illness) a major new [study](#) finds ([Health Foundation Newsletter](#)).

Ambulance service bosses warn patients 'coming to harm' over increasing hospital delays. At a board meeting of the North East Ambulance Service, senior figures said that while the service was performing better than many others around the UK, this did not mean it was doing well ([Chronicle](#)).

Ambulance review. A leading former hospital trust chief executive has been appointed to lead the previously announced "review" of allegations that the North East Ambulance Service "covered-up" worrying failings in relation to its handling of deaths ([Chronicle](#)).



5. POLITICS.

National Crisis what about the Old and Vulnerable? The government have gone missing. Indolence has lost them 7 weeks. We are left with conflicting sound bites as to solutions but no policy, no action plan and no actual leadership. We have a right to expect better from those trusted to run our country at this time of crisis. A NEPA View.

Silver Voices petition for a £200 minimum pension. The full new state pension is worth £185.15 per week, while the basic state pension is set at £141.85 weekly. The petitioners note that in September 2020, only 6% of pensioners received the full £185 rate. Their petition calls for a Minimum Pension Guarantee of at least £200 per week ([D.Express](#)).

Crisis Bites. North East councils have warned of "unprecedented and unavoidable" cash shortfalls set to total tens of millions of pounds as the cost of living crisis bites.

Durham County Council. It has reported that its financial forecasts have "deteriorated further" since warning just last month that almost £22m of savings would need to be found in 2023/24 and £55m over the next four years. ([Chronicle](#)).

Levelling up fund beauty contests. North East leaders have slammed the "beauty contest" which forces them to compete with each other over vital government cash ([S.Gazette](#)).

South Tyneside's levelling up bid for a share in the £5bn fund. A chance for the government to show Levelling Up pledge is 'more than just an empty slogan' ([S.Gazette](#)).



The Saga Ends. The CEO of Northumberland County Council walks away with a £209 payout following a protracted and public dispute with leading councillors ([N.Gazette](#)).

Poo Watch. The Government is unlikely to take serious action in the foreseeable future over sewage overflows along the UK coastline, a campaigner has said ([N.Echo](#)).

6. POVERTY.

This does not help. The former Chancellor boasted of taking money from "deprived urban areas" to help wealthy towns. A video shows him saying that Labour "shoved all the funding into deprived urban areas" and that "needed to be undone" ([Newstatesman](#)).

Food banks warn they are struggling to meet demand. They are facing increased demand, but falling donations, as the cost of living crisis bites people across the income range ([Money Box BBC](#)).

'It gets to the point I'm reluctant to turn on the lights'. Angie Comerford, who runs Hebburn Helps community foodbank said: "Honest to God, what are people supposed to do? I'm hearing stories already of the preparations that people are making for the winter months and a lot of it is quite worrying" ([Chronicle](#)).

Nearly one in four adults plans never to turn their heating on this winter, polling suggests, with average bills are set to rocket while temperatures drop. The figure is even higher for parents with children under 18 ([Telegraph](#)).

British Gas Centrica 10% - largesse. With pre-tax profit of £98m in the first half of 2022 for British Gas Energy, the initial contribution of 10% would be £9.8m. The company has increased this to £12m to ensure there is more available this winter ([Centrica](#)).



Dame Clare Moriarty, CEO of Citizens Advice, said: "Every single day at Citizens Advice we're already helping people in the most heartbreaking circumstances, trying to scrape together enough to feed their kids and keep the lights on. This will get far, far worse unless the government acts ([Citizens Advice](#)).

7. SECURITY.

An emergency warning system. This allowing alerts about severe weather and other life-threatening events to be sent to mobile phones, will go live in October in England, The Cabinet Office says the technology will alert up to 85% of the population. The messages will be sent automatically to any smartphone which is switched on, although it is possible to opt out by changing a mobile phone setting ([BBC](#)).

Northumbria Police feeling the pinch. It is estimated the force uses about 1.3 million litres of fuel every year, straining the books as prices rise at the pump, while senior officers are also braced for gas and electricity bills to surge by as much as 55%, according to estimates by the North East Procurement Organisation. ([S/Echo](#)).

Attacks on emergency workers. Highest in parts of the North East but especially Durham. Figures show that violence and abuse against emergency crews from Durham were recorded more often than almost every other part of England last year. Overall, those working for police, fire and ambulance units across the whole Durham patch recorded 658 assaults in the year to March 2022 ([Northern Echo](#)).

8. TRANSPORT.

Darlington Railway Station. Work is underway to prepare the first buildings alongside Darlington railway station for demolition, in another step towards its £100M-plus redevelopment ([gazettelive](#)).

Buses across England. These will benefit from up to £130 million of government support, ensuring services keep running and millions of passengers can continue using affordable transport ([gov.uk](#)).

Bus Enhanced Partnership (EP). The North East has been indicatively awarded the largest allocation of Bus Service Improvement Plan funding in the country at £163.5m. ([Transport North East](#) - see p15 in the NECA Scrutiny Committee paper).



Go North East bus owners sold. Go-Ahead Group has agreed to an increased buyout offer from Australia's Kinetic Holding and Spain-based Globalvia Inversiones, valuing the transport operator at £669m (Reuters).

Sean Fahey
NEPA Secretary

The NEPA Website can be accessed by [clicking here](#) or google "[NEPA Pensioners](#)"
NEPA Membership Subscription is £10 per year.

Meetings are once a month (not in August) at the Tyneside Irish Centre Newcastle.
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