

North East Pensioners Association

Regional impact report on issues affecting pensioners wellbeing in **AUGUST 2023** 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 underlined words)



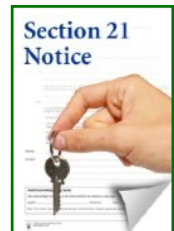
1. CARE HOMES/CARERS & HOUSING.

Families sue Government over care home Covid deaths. Relatives of 30 people who died in early stages of pandemic issue claims against the then Health Secretary, individual homes and hospital trusts. One of the solicitor said, "Our clients believe that the guidance issued in the early weeks of the pandemic led to thousands of unnecessary deaths" ([Telegraph](#)).

Mortgage lenders cut rates. Nationwide announced a reduction of up to 0.55 percentage points – its largest since February – TSB will also cut rates by up to 0.4 points, while HSBC said its rates would be lowered in August ([Telegraph](#)).

Home Improvements a Triple Dividend. 3.5m homes in England are a health and safety risk. This according to report by the Centre for Ageing Better. This is particularly an issue as people age, with 1 in 7 homes headed by someone aged 65 or over being classed as non-decent ([CFAB](#)).

North East evictions. Ministry of Justice figures show that 127 section 21 "no fault" eviction notices were handed out across the region between April and June of this year. It is the highest number since the first quarter of 2007, when 131 such notices were issued ([Freelibrary](#)).



2. ECONOMY

North East Unemployment 4.2%. The North East saw the largest increase in the employment rate compared with the same period last year, increasing by 3.3 percentage points. ([ONS](#)).

Tynemouth Market. Voted the best seaside market in the UK. Located in the town's breathtaking Metro Victorian station. With over 150 stalls that vary from clothes to jewellery and street food, the dog friendly market caters to the whole family ([gazeboshop](#)).

Teesside Hydrogen facility, being built. This has moved to the next stage of Government funding - with the hope of more than 600 jobs. Aim- ing to start production in 2026, Hy- Green is planned to be one of the UK's biggest facilities ([D&STimes](#)).

Gig economy for the elderly. The Work and Pensions Secretary suggests that over 50s "consider working for the likes of Deliveroo. The TUC warned that these comments "risk glorifying the gig economy" where "often pay is low, there's often no job security, [and] little if any employment rights" ([CentreForAgeing](#)).



Teesside clean up cost reaches £70m. Work to decontaminate the former Redcar steelworks is almost complete and the hazardous substances status on the huge industrial site could be removed by the end of the year ([D&STimes](#)).

Bailiffs making record profits collecting debt for councils. The charity Debt Justice, said: The UK government needs to properly fund council tax reduction schemes and local authorities need to find more ethical approaches to preventing and collecting arrears" ([B/Telegraph](#)).

3. HEALTH AND WELFARE

The lowest life expectancy in the country. Research from a coalition of charities and public health groups has again highlighted the chasm between life expectancy in the North East and in London and the South East. If online try the postcode life expectancy checker [click here](#) ([Chronicle](#)).



MRI scans improve prostate cancer diagnosis in screening trial. New research has found using MRI as a screening test alongside the prostate specific antigen (PSA) test allowed detection of cancers that would have been missed by the blood test alone ([KingsCollege](#)).

Water firms face legal action over claims of underreporting sewage discharges. Claims are being brought against Severn Trent Water, Thames Water, United Utilities, Anglian Water, Yorkshire Water and Northumbrian Water ([BusinessLive](#)).

Pension Credit. If you're single with total weekly income under roughly £220 or... - If you're a couple, both of pension age, with weekly income under roughly £320...Then get [online](#) or call the Pension Credit helpline: 0800 99 1234 to see if you're due ([MSE](#)).

Northumberland Council's solar staff car park to save up to £150,000 a year. A total of 120 EV charge points have been installed, including 100 fast chargers and 20 rapid chargers, with some dedicated for accessible parking bays ([Airqualitynews](#)).

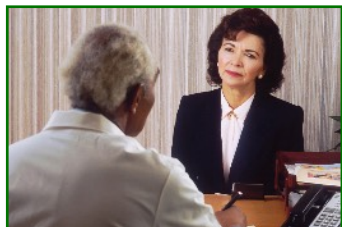
4. NHS

Furious staff issue warning after Newcastle's NHS-run sexual health service handed to private companies. Putting NHS-run sexual health services in Newcastle into the hands of private companies risks a rise in unintended pregnancies and leaving more sexually transmitted infections untreated, furious staff have warned ([Chronicle](#)).

Covid Jabs. The number of people who qualify for an NHS Covid booster this autumn has been reduced by about 12 million. This after the minimum age was raised to 65 from 50. It means doses could be for sale on the private market ([iNews](#)).

New mental health hospital to open in Morpeth this autumn. It forms one of the Government's "40 new hospitals". A secure facility housing men with a mental illness, learning disability or personality disorder. There will be 72 beds across six wards ([Chronicle](#)).

Mental Health - £28m savings. Leaders at the Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Trust - which runs mental health services highlighted "areas of concern" when it comes to responding to crisis referrals, pressure on services supporting A&Es with psychiatric cases and delays in supporting children and young people ([Chronicle](#)).



One in six GPs fail to give patients face-to-face appointments. This situation 'totally unacceptable' say patients' groups, with many people unable to 'fight their corner' ([Telegraph](#)).

Cancer waiting time targets could be scrapped in England under NHS proposals. Oncologist Pat Price, the head of the Radiotherapy UK charity, said the potential new targets were "ominous and deeply worrying". "The performance against the current targets is shockingly bad and has been for many months now ([Skynews](#)).

Gateshead pioneers dietetics service for those living with cancer. Diet and nutrition play a vital role in ensuring the effectiveness of cancer therapies and Macmillan Cancer Support dietitian's are seeing better outcomes through improved nutrition extending both the length and quality of life for patients ([NHS](#)).

**MACMILLAN.
CANCER SUPPORT**

5. POLITICS

North East councils facing deficit of nearly £200m. This nationwide £5bn shortfall threatens basic services ([Chronicle](#)). Regional predicted cumulative shortfall for 25/26 (deficit as % of overall net budget) includes:

- Gateshead - £45.9m (15.8%)
- Newcastle - £44.3m (16.9%)
- Northumberland - £28.1m (7.3%)
- North Tyneside - £21.9m (12%)
- Sunderland - £20.5m (8.3%)
- South Tyneside - £18m (11.8%)
- County Durham - £17.8m (3.4%)

Is the Chancellor putting your pension funds at risk? He has supported an agreement between 9 of the U.K.'s largest defined contribution pension providers committing them to the objective of allocating, 5% of assets in their default funds to unlisted equities by 2030. For insight see the YouTube video ([Meaningfulmoney](#)).

Pension Update Deadline Extended by 2 years. Taxpayers now have until 5 April 2025 to fill gaps in their National Insurance record from April 2006 that may increase their State Pension ([Gov.UK](#)).

Age UK say 735,240 households missed out under the Energy Bills Support Scheme. The Alternative Fund amounting to £3m for households without a direct relationship to a domestic energy supplier, e.g. those in park homes or living on boats – has already faced criticism from the Public Accounts Committee ([Independent](#)).

The digital divide. Key services are being delivered digitally. For many, the convenience is a benefit. There are appreciable downsides for the millions of people who find it difficult to carry out basic day-to-day functions in a world that assumes everyone is comfortable online. Are the older poor and vulnerable to be ignored ([Guardian](#))?

6. POVERTY

“Too scared to put the heating on”: 13 million households not heating their homes when it’s cold due to energy bill fears. This according to a which survey of 4,000 people. ([Which?](#))



7. SECURITY

Electric Bike Patrol. Northumbria Police officers to respond to incidents quicker thanks to electronically assisted bikes. The new electronically assisted pedal cycles have been provided through funding from the Safer Streets scheme ([Chronicle](#)).

A man who stole his grandmother's funeral savings to fund a gambling habit. He was jailed at Newcastle Crown Court for 6 months suspended for 18 months and must complete 150 hours' unpaid work after admitting theft ([BBC](#)).

Gateshead Carer sentenced to 15 month for fraud. She was found guilty at Newcastle Crown Court Over of taking over £2500 from a vulnerable pensions account on 49 occasion's ([Chronicle](#)).



Recently in the North-East two elderly victims have been defrauded of £22,500 and £7,000. This after criminal called pretending to be a police officer and stating their bank account had been compromised.

“They prey on people’s vulnerabilities and fears, exploiting this and profiting from it. The best thing people can do is assume any correspondence or cold calls are fake” ([Scamalert advice](#)).

8. TRANSPORT

“The ticket office closures programme breaches every known aspect of equality under the UK laws that we all abide by. That is why the National Pensioners Convention submission to the public consultation demands that this proposal is completely abandoned. (Jan Short NPC General Secretary).



Sunderland pensioners and vulnerable groups
Public protest 25 August 2023

Where have all the buses gone? Long time passing. After nearly 40 years of deregulation and outsourcing, and nearly 15 years of the cuts and shortfalls imposed by Whitehall on local authorities, the mode of travel that still accounts for 69% of journeys by public transport is in an ever-worsening mess ([Guardian](#)).

Mindless vandalism. At least 17 North Shields and Wallsend bus shelter smashed over a weekend. Nexus said, “This is mindless vandalism to important public facilities, which will cost the taxpayer a significant amount of money” ([BBC](#)).

Bus workers balloted for strike action. About 1,300 Go North East workers across all six of its depots in Sunderland, Washington, Gateshead, Hexham, Consett and Percy Main could walk out next month. The ballot closes 12/09/23 ([BBC](#)).

Newcastle Airport plans for ultra-rapid electric car charging forecourt and coffee drive-thru. The charging forecourt will include 12 charging bays and will be capable of adding up to 400 miles of range to fully-electric cars in 20 minutes ([Chronicle](#)).

Metro Cullercoats. The station to undergo £500,000 refurbishment scheme. Its footbridge will be closed from 23 August, until January 2024. Passengers will need to use an [alternative walking route](#) to get from one platform to the other ([NEXUS](#)).

Whitley Bay Metro. A £5m restoration of the station has been thrown into doubt, with the construction firm behind the works on the brink of collapse ([N/Echo](#)).



Tommy Ridley. It is with great sadness we report the death of our good friend and long time NEPA member Tommy Ridley. We retain the fondest memories of him, nothing was ever a bother. If we needed help he was there often at one end of our banner with his late mate Fred Rix on the other. They formed the daring duo from UCATT retired members and Tommy was their Secretary. Our deepest condolences to all his family and friends.

Sean Fahey
NEPA Secretary

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