

North East Pensioners Association

Regional impact report on issues affecting pensioners wellbeing in SEPTEMBER 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.

The Hidden Renters report. Private renters on a low income in later life are a largely hidden group – often unseen and rarely considered by decision makers when it comes to the changes to policies and services they need. Yet their numbers are growing. This report identifies the changes required (Independent Age).

Housing and environment targets 'at risk due to haphazard Government approach'. This according to a report by the Lords Built Environment Committee (Independent).

Grenfell fire legacy. Those in a building in England that is 18 metres tall or higher, or at least seven storeys tall, must be registered with the Building Safety Regulator. It is a criminal offence for any qualifying building not to be registered after 1 October 2023 (HSE).



2. ECONOMY

The North East unemployment rate 5.2%. This the largest increase in the employment rate compared with the same period last year, increasing by 2.7% (ONS).

Zero pledges? The executive director of the North East Chamber of Commerce, said: Significant changes in the national policy framework – especially reversals or delays – will greatly undermine the ability of businesses in the North East to grow and invest in their net zero strategies (Chronicle)

SeAH Wind factory orders 30,000 tonnes of steel from Lackenby. Steel work is being erected as major progress continues on the £450m SeAH Wind monopile manufacturing facility at South Bank on the former steelworks site (S&DTimes).

22 Wilko stores in the North East have been snapped up by competitor Poundland. Nationally, the Pepco Group will rebrand 71 former Wilko branches as Poundland and hire new staff, prioritising those who previously worked staffed the shops (N/Echo).

New job prospects are go. Plans approved for next phase of International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP) across Sunderland and South Tyneside. The IAMP has been designated as a 'nationally significant' project by Government, and is expected to create thousands of jobs over several phases (S/Gazette).

Virgin Media has millions of broadband customers in the UK. These faced an eye-watering 13.8% average increase to their bills this year. That's more than £100 extra a year for some households. The consumer champion 'Which' have asked Ofcom, the telecoms regulator, to investigate this urgently (Which).



3. HEALTH AND WELFARE



A commissioner would work as an independent champion. Bringing together older people and professionals in government, the NHS, business and elsewhere to tackle the complex challenges older people experience. This, according to the new report by the charity [Independent Age](#).

A Government report warns of slow pace of digital switchover by telecare users. Taking the form of equipment such as fall detectors and personal alarms, telecare detects when there is a problem and sends alerts to a call centre which then organises help ([Socialcaredtoday](#)). So if no links no alarms? Whats being done?

Aged 100 - not out. Centenarians living in England and Wales reached 13,924 in 2021. Centenarians still only represent 0.2% of the total population. The UK ranks as the seventh country worldwide for highest number of centenarians, and ninth once population size is taken into account ([ONS](#)).

Make dementia a priority. The [Alzheimer's Society](#) in an open letter to the DHSC reiterate that the 900,000 people living with dementia deserve a national strategy that will:

- **Drive** forward the improvement of dementia diagnosis rates through a funded plan
- **Develop** strategies to support diagnosis methods and deliver access to breakthrough treatments as soon as they become available
- **Deliver** an improved pathway for people living with dementia navigating the health and social care system
- **Demonstrate** how data has underpinned the delivery of the strategy.



4. NHS



Newcastle protesters against privatisation. Newcastle City Council awarded the sexual health contract to two private companies: Solutions 4 Health and Preventx after Newcastle Hospitals' Trust did not put in a bid for the service. From 1st October, Sexual Health Services will operate from the same building New Croft House ([KONPNE](#)).

Be aware of NHS consultants and doctors industrial action. They were on strike in September (consultants for 2 days and doctors for 3 days). They all plan to strike together again on 2, 3, and 4 October. Christmas day levels of staffing only will be provided ([NHS](#)).

Middlesbrough hospital performs its first day case robotic prostatectomy. Robotic prostatectomy is a minimally invasive robot-assisted surgery that helps remove the prostate and treat prostate cancer providing an effective mode of treatment for patients with very low complications (NHS)



Newcastle hospitals are the first in the UK to carry out a pioneering implant for patients with late-stage age-related macular degeneration. Surgeons successfully implanted a miniature telescope which enlarges objects in the centre of the visual field and, essentially, gives patients back their vision and freedom (NHS).

Care Quality Commission adult inpatient survey of 63,000 patients 2022.

Nationally, they found that patient satisfaction levels have remained largely static since 2021, but they saw a longer term decline in most areas compared to previous years. If on line [click here](#) to find the results of your local Trust (CQC).

5. POLITICS

Pensioners are on track for a 8.5% increase next year. Keeping older voters onside is a priority for both the Conservatives and Labour, but ministers say raising the benefit by the highest of wage growth, inflation or 2.5pc is unfeasible. Neither party would comment on the future of the policy (Telegraph).



2 old political warhorses (noble Lords Hague and Blunket) have publicly come out against the Triple Lock. Jan Shortt, general secretary of the National Pensioners Convention, said: "There are those in our government who want to get rid of the lock completely, exposing many more of us to hardship (Express).

New permanent Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Amerdeep Somal has been named as the preferred candidate for the role of the permanent Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, taking up the position in January 2024 from the current interim Ombudsman Paul Najsarek (Socialecaretoday).

Don't put your vote at risk. 8m people across the UK are either incorrectly registered to vote or missing completely. This according to Electoral Commission research. The good news is older people and those who have lived at their address longer are more likely to be correctly registered (E/Commission).

6. POVERTY

Date for the next cost of living payment October 31st. Eligible households will receive £300. It will be the second of three payments totalling up to £900 for those eligible and on means-tested benefits, such as Universal Credit, Pension Credit or tax credits, in 2023/24 (D&STimes).

Newcastle Foodbank set new record. Between June and August 2023, the charity provided 6,533 food parcels to households, totalling 79.5 tonnes of food. The figures represent a 20% increase, creating the busiest summer in its 10 year history (Chronicle).

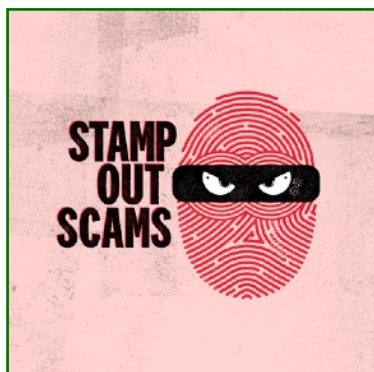
Fuel poverty of 14% in South Tyneside to be tackled. Council chiefs have backed a new strategy aimed at tackling fuel poverty. The council, added "improving the energy efficiency of homes is the "most cost-effective and long-term solution to tackling fuel poverty" (S/Gazette).

7. SECURITY

Parliament passes sweeping Online Safety Bill. The Online Safety Bill is set to become law after peers passed the controversial legislation that places new duties on

social media and technology companies to protect children and other users from harmful and illegal content ([ComputerWeekly](#)).

Northumbria Police. They are deploying an extra 134 police officers to strengthen the current neighbourhood policing teams already in place – giving them greater capability and resources to respond to and get ahead of emerging issues ([N/Police](#)).



Buying on social media. It can be difficult to tell the difference between a good deal and a scam. Fraudsters take time to set up a fake sale. So, you should take your time to check it's genuine and not focus on price or availability ([Lloydsbank](#)).

Telephone Switchover Scams. The Local Government Association says people who use healthcare telephony devices are particularly at risk of being targeted by scammers, who trick victims into disclosing their personal and financial information over the phone. Around 1.8 million people use these devices across the country ([Which](#)).



Which - Stamp out scams petition. Scammers steal hundreds of millions from innocent victims every year, bombarding us with fraudulent texts, emails and calls. The Government and businesses need to do more to protect us from scams. Demand change by signing the Which petition by [clicking here](#) ([Which](#)).

8. TRANSPORT

Bus stops on Sunday. 86-year-old pleads for return of Sunday bus for elderly residents of 'ignored' Newcastle community. Pensioner is calling for help for elderly residents of Red House Farm, who have been left without a bus calling on their estate on Sunday since last year ([Chronicle](#)).

Be aware Go North East drivers walk out next month in a pay dispute. Action will be from 30 September - 6 October and 14 - 20 October. Workers - including office staff - at depots in Sunderland, Washington, Gateshead, Hexham, Consett and Percy Main [voted to take strike action earlier this month](#) ([BBC](#)).

A1 dualling delayed again. Northumberland Council leader "surprised and disappointed". This when the Government delayed a long-awaited final decision on proposals to dual the road from Morpeth to Ellingham by an additional 9 months ([H/ Courant](#)).

New Tyne and Wear Metro trains delayed until 2024. The new trains have started to arrive, however Nexus said it would only be able to carry out a "short demonstration run" this year, with their use on regular services delayed until early 2024 ([BBC](#)).

RAC view on fuel price. "Diesel is set to jump in price from its current average of 159p a litre to over 170p. Petrol is different with [RAC Fuel Watch](#) data showing that prices on the forecourt are actually too high due to retailers taking bigger margins than normal" ([RAC 19/09/23](#)).



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