

North East Pensioners Association



Regional Impact Report on issues affecting pensioners wellbeing in NOV/DEC 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 on underlined words



1. CARE HOMES/CARERS & HOUSING.

Gateshead care home Panorama investigation - Overseas staff exploitation.

Gateshead Council said they acknowledge the concerns of their residents who may be impacted by the [BBC programme](#) about the care home, managed by Prestwick Care Group. The allegations raised are very serious and we are working closely with safeguarding partners to ensure a thorough investigation ([Gateshead Council](#)).

Newcastle care home rated inadequate again. The Care Quality Commission found a system to ensure regulatory requirements were met was not in place. The provider had not implemented robust governance procedures to improve quality and safety. The provider had been in breach of the regulations since 2015 ([CQC](#)).

Covid Inquiry - Care Home Revelations. Matt Hancock has admitted it is "quite clear" the protective ring he claimed had been thrown around care homes early in the Covid pandemic did not amount to an "unbroken circle". More than 45,000 care home residents died from or with Covid between March 2020 and January 2022 ([Telegraph](#)).

There are at least 5 million unpaid carers in England and Wales. They play a vital role in society. But according to research by the Health Foundation only a small minority receive direct support from their local authority ([Health Foundation](#)).

The Carer's Leave Act 2023. This groundbreaking legislation will come in next April. It will give employees, who are unpaid carers, up to 5 days unpaid leave from work a year in support of their caring responsibilities ([CarersUK](#)).

Housing. Rents have surged at a record rate (6.1%) while house prices have fallen annually for the first time in more than a decade. The average UK house price fell by 0.1% in the 12 months to September 2023 ([ONS](#)).

Mortgage areas. UK Finance's latest data shows that there were 87,930 homeowner mortgages in arrears in Q3 2023, seven per cent more than the previous quarter. The number of Buy To Let mortgages in arrears was 11,540, a 29 per cent increase during the same period ([UKF](#)).

2. ECONOMY

Nissan. It has announced it will build three fully-electric models at its Sunderland plant as part of a £2 billion investment by the manufacturer. The manufacturer, has confirmed it will also be the site for production of all-electric versions of Qashqai and Juke, as well as the next-generation Leaf ([Fleetnews](#)).



The North East stands to get a £1.9bn annual boost. This supporting 27,000 green jobs as the UK transitions to net zero. This optimism at the region's second annual Net Zero Summit was in November 2023 ([NEBylines](#)).





Farmers leader unhappy. The [NFU president](#) slams Jacob Rees-Mogg as 'morally bankrupt'. Liz Webster, chair of Save British Farming, said he was 'letting down farmers'. "He is not only failing his constituents with his inflammatory anti-British farming outbursts backing foreign lower standard imports, but also the country as a whole, ([FarmersGuardian](#)).



3. HEALTH AND WELFARE

Undiagnosed Dementia Rates. A new report led by a former health minister, outlines the ways in which the government can tackle 'alarming' rates of undiagnosed Dementia. The report, which was launched on 4th December was created to open ministers eyes to the severity of the situation ([SocialCareToday](#))

Top tips for living with dementia this Christmas. In the UK one in 11 over 65-year-olds live with dementia, which equates to more than 944,000.

- **Involve your loved on in planning** – this can reduce the impact on dementia at Christmas by lessening potential confusion caused by disruption to normal routine.
- **Maintain a routine** – it is imperative that your loved ones tries to keep to their normal routine on Christmas day as much as possible. In addition, helping your loved on keep to their routine during the lead up to the big day can also be effective.



- **Manage noise levels** – it is suggested that the person hosting Christmas politely asks their guests to keep noise levels to a minimum as if things get too loud this can be very disruptive for a person with dementia.

•Remaining mindful of food and drink – It can be tempting overindulge at Christmas, and while it's important not to be too restrictive, it

can be wise to monitor the food and drink intake of the person you care for, considering meal times, as much as the quantity of food ([SocialCareToday](#)).

Features preventing older people from receiving quality social workers. Bristol University research exposes factors including ageism, lack of investment and pressured services that are stopping patients from getting access to valuable carers when they need them most ([Bristol University](#)).



Social care shake-up. Budget stripped of £1bn and hit by delays, says watchdog. The cash meant to be targeted at the overhaul of crisis-hit social care has been spent elsewhere, according to the Whitehall spending watchdog, the National Audit Office ([Mirror](#)).



BT axing old lines. The North East will be among the last to be switched over, in summer 2024. BT has pledged to contact those affected "at least" 4 weeks in advance to ensure they are ready. Customers who want to make the switch before the deadline can contact BT ([Chronicle](#)).

Telecoms providers who use BT's network. They will have to switch to an internet-based service, [Digital Voice](#), which does not function during power failures and is incompatible with some panic button systems. There are fears that thousands of vulnerable customers, in areas with a poor mobile phone signal, could be left incommunicado in an emergency ([Guardian](#)).



4. NHS

The Integrated Care Board CEO Report November. The CEO gave an update on the revised financial forecast for this year which has now been improved to an agreed deficit with NHS England of £35m reduced from £50m ([NHS](#)).

ICB Staff cuts. Our ICB is focused on delivering the national running cost reduction of 30% which will mean fewer ICB jobs. This is a significant change for staff and partners they work closely with, and they do not underestimate the impact it is having on everyone at this time ([LocalGovernmentChronicle](#)).



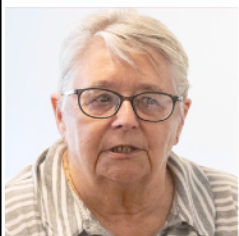
Urgent treatment centre - Middlesbrough. The £9 million centre is due to open in April 2024. It is part of an ambitious plan to integrate services, provide care closer to home for many people in the Tees Valley and ease pressure on the already busy James Cook emergency department ([NHS](#)).

NHS Good news as of November. Latest data published by NHS England shows that over 69% of patients in the North East are now getting their treatment within 18 weeks of referral from their GP. This surpasses the national average of 57.6% ([NHS](#)).

5. POLITICS



Infected blood campaigners victory. MPs from across the political spectrum backed an amendment to the Victims and Prisoners Bill which will see a new body set up to administer compensation for victims of the contaminated blood scandal. Campaigners including Northumberland's Sean Cavens said this was a "massive victory" and meant justice was one step closer ([Chronicle](#)).



Autumn Statement

National Pensioners Convention General Secretary's views

Jan Shortt said: "The Chancellor appears to give with one hand while stealthily taking away with the other. He gave away tax concessions, but failed to invest in our crisis hit health, care and public services." He also announced controversial measures to force the disabled or long term sick to find work or lose benefits. Key issues she noted:

- **State Pension** to rise by 8.5% in line with inflation from April 2024. The rates will be: £221.20 a week for the new full state pension (£11,502 a year) and £169.50 a week for the old basic state pension (£8,814 a year).

- **Universal Credit** and other working-age benefits to increase by 6.7% from April 2024.
- **Local Housing Allowance** - which determines the level of Housing Benefit and Universal Credit people receive for rent - to be unfrozen and increased to 30%.
- **Claimants** deemed able to work but refusing to seek employment will **lose their benefits**.
- Under plans that need Parliamentary approval, those who fail to find work for 18 months will have to do work experience, or **lose your benefits**.
- **National Insurance** - cut from 12% to 10% from 6th January, affecting 27 million people.
- **National Living Wage** - up £10.42 to £11.44 an hour.

Thanks to the government's failure to increase the tax thresholds, many older people will soon have to pay income tax as their earnings exceed the tax threshold ([NPC](#)).



6. POVERTY.



South Tyneside rough sleepers. Concerns grow after a 'very worrying' rise in the numbers. In the first five months of 2023/24, the council saw 1,284 people come forward as homeless – or at risk of homelessness. It also prevented 117 cases of homelessness and provided relief in 185 cases ([ShieldsGazette](#))

Energy Bills. From 1 January 2024 the price for energy for a typical household who use gas and electricity and pay by Direct Debit will go up by £94. This will take the price cap from £1,834 to £1,928 per year ([Ofgem](#)). Compare this to last month's Office for Budget Responsibility released [new data](#) which highlights how little this government's 'windfall tax' has actually done to rein in the profits of fossil fuel companies ([neweconomics](#)).



7. SECURITY



Durham new police's chief constable. Rachel Bacon said she would place a greater emphasis on neighbourhood policing as part of a renewed focus on connecting with communities in County Durham and Darlington. She pledged to get more officers on the streets to help respond to concerns about crime ([D&STimes](#)).

Thornaby Woman targeted in £13k railway station in car park QR code scam. Fraudsters covered a genuine code with one of their own. Action Fraud said more than 400 such offences were logged in the first nine months of 2023, compared with 112 in 2020 ([BBC](#)).

8. TRANSPORT

£544 million pot to help fill in North East potholes. Roads across the region are set to benefit from a Government cash boost as part of a major road resurfacing programme. This includes County Durham, Northumberland, Newcastle, Sunderland and the Tees Valley Combined Authority ([Chronicle](#)).

Government action on EV batteries needed to prevent decline in car industry, MPs warn. A cross-party group of MPs launched its investigation into battery production as the Britishvolt project foundered. But MPs warned that finance, skills shortages, energy costs and lower subsidies than other countries are threatening the development of gigafactories in the UK ([BusinessLive](#)).



Go North East bus strike ends as workers vote to accept new pay offer. Normal service on Go North East routes resumed on Saturday 2nd December after members of the Unite union voted to accept an 11.2% pay rise offer from the company ([Chronicle](#)).

A big thank you to the [Durham City Glow Creative](#) marketing team that volunteered their time to fix our NEPA website just before Christmas when it needed some urgent technical TLC.

Sean Fahey
NEPA Secretary



**If you want to know more contact the NEPA Secretary at :
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