

North East Pensioners Association

Regional Impact Report on issues affecting pensioners wellbeing in JULY & AUGUST 2024 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/HOUSING.

New Homes. The Deputy PM has announced an overhaul of the planning system to pave the way for 1.5 million new homes over the next five years to tackle England's acute housing crisis ([N/Echo](#)).



Briadene, Dementia Care Home Westerhope Newcastle burgled. Staff and families left heartbroken as garden furniture and ornaments stolen ([Chronicle](#)).

320,000 people pushed into poverty because of mortgage interest rate rises. Adults remortgaging in 2022 were 2 percentage points more likely to fall into arrears on bills. This suggests that, once all households have remortgaged, the number of adults behind on bills could rise by 370,000 ([InstituteForFiscalStudies](#)).

2. ECONOMY.



As many as 140,000 pensioners are set to receive their first tax bill since retiring due to "fiscal drag". A failure to raise tax thresholds in line with inflation, wages and pensions means record numbers of retired people will get a tax bill this year ([Express](#)).

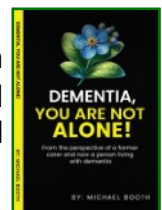
North East Mayor to approve 'landmark' investment in manufacturing skills facility. The £14.6m project, receives support worth £9.7m from the Combined Authority, provides open access facilities to industry for skills training in the region's advanced manufacturing sector, with a particular focus on EV and battery manufacturing ([EducationPartnershipNE](#)).

Insolvency-related activities in the North East reached an 11-month high. Figures released by insolvency and restructuring trade body R3 and Creditsafe show 94 cases of insolvency-related activity in the region July. That was made up of liquidator appointments, administrator appointments and creditors' meetings ([BusinessLive](#)).

3. HEALTH AND WELFARE.

Scrapping the social care cap is a disgrace that will come back to haunt this government. During the election, Labour committed to overhauling adult social care – yet, in one of her first acts as chancellor, she has removed the ceiling that limits an individual's costs to £86,000 ([Independent](#)).

Dementia, you are not alone. A Hartlepool man who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's just months after his mother died from the disease has published a book to help others know they are not alone. The book is both factual and practical ([NHS](#)).



The North East is set to have the lowest water bills in the country.

Ofwat said that average bills in the Northumbrian Water area would rise from £415 now to £460, excluding inflation, in the period between 2025 and 2030 ([Chronicle](#)).

Fines for 3 of England's water companies for failing to manage sewage spills. The proposed fines are the first set of results from Ofwat's largest ever investigation into the industry - it includes a £104m penalty for Thames Water, £47m for Yorkshire Water and £17m for Northumbrian Water ([BusinessLive](#)).



NHS 'soup and shake' diet. Tens of thousands more people in England living with type 2 diabetes could be offered an 800-calorie-a-day "soup and shake" diet after research found almost one in three on the groundbreaking NHS scheme permanently wiped out their disease ([Guardian](#)).

Martin Lewis has warned that 1m people could be missing out Attendance allowance. 1.6 million elderly people get Attendance Allowance as it stands, but there are plenty more who could claim it. If you need advice Martin recommends you contact AgeUK on 0800 678 1602 (8am to 7pm) or [Click Gov.UK](#) (N/Echo).

Suicide. A Darlington pensioner who took his own life is believed to have decided he could no longer live without his beloved wife after finding her dead in May. The **Samaritans** are available, day or night free on, 116 123, email jo@samaritans.org, or visit www.samaritans.org to find nearest branch.

How can you bring care costs down? The Which Magazine offer a free access site, giving some very clear advice and including key questions e.g. When will the council cover your care costs? Do you have to sell your house? Care Home fees (e.g. about £1100 per week in our region)? See how you can reduce the cost of care ([Which](#))?

4. THE NHS.

Ambulance Response times. Our region continues to provide the best performing ambulance service in the country for the most serious or life-threatening (Category One) calls as they continue to see high volumes of patients ([NENCProviders](#)).

Freeman world-first in heart care operation. This saved the life of a Jarrow pensioner who had 4 valves replaced. The 'ultra-rare' operation at the Newcastle hospital is offered as a last resort for patients who have this very uncommon type of heart failure, known as carcinoid heart disease ([NHS](#)).

North East hospital trusts to share board chair as Great North Healthcare Alliance moves forward. Sir Paul Ennals is to become the interim joint chair of the boards of directors at both the Newcastle Hospitals [NHS](#) Trust and the Northumbria Healthcare NHS Trust from July ([Chronicle](#)).

England's GPs are squaring up to the government. The industrial action is not primarily about pay, but funding to keep a service running that provides up to 90% of all care, and whose share of the NHS budget has fallen to its lowest in eight years at only 8.4% ([Guardian](#)).



Patients in danger from overworked GPs This says doctors' spokesperson as strike threat looms. 'It is dangerous for GPs to see 60-70 patients a day,' warns top GP Clare Gerada ([Independent](#)).

Care Quality Commission. The Health secretary has said that the CQC is "not fit for purpose," after an interim review of the regulator of health and social care in England found significant failings, including a lack of clinical expertise among inspectors, inconsistent assessments, and problems with the IT system ([BMJ](#)).

5. POLITICS.

A quarter of a million pensioners in the North East will lose their annual winter fuel allowance payments. This means that those not on pension credit or other means-tested benefits will no longer get the annual payments, worth between £100 and £300 ([Chronicle](#)).



Sign Age UK petition to save the Winter Fuel Payment for struggling pensioners [Click Here](#). If you or a loved one would like to sign offline you can [print a template of the petition](#) or request one by writing to FREEPOST Age UK Campaigns.

The NPC General Secretary wrote to the Chancellor. She said NPC members are 'angered and concerned' at the Chancellor's decision to remove the Winter Fuel Payment from older people who do not receive Pension Credit. The reported saving of £1.5bn per year to Treasury (The [Telegraph](#) & [Sky News](#)) seems relatively poor compared to the mass misery that will be caused this winter.

How have pensioner incomes and poverty changed in recent years (IFS Report)? This report examines the key trends in pensioner incomes and poverty over the past two decades. Since 2011, income growth for poor pensioners has lagged behind the population as a whole. From 2011-12 to 2022-23, incomes for poor pensioners rose by only 5% (after adjusting for inflation [IFS](#)).



Mayor of North East Combine Authority Kim McGuinness Meeting 23/07/2024 with the officers of The National Pensioners Convention (Northern Region)

NPC(NR) asked for the continual support of the national campaign against pensioner poverty and for the retention of the triple lock, no taxation of annual pension increases and a long term aim of pensioners being paid pensions equal to the National Minimum Wage.

They thanked her for her continued support of justice for WASPI Woman and asked her to continue that support and that of a new parliamentary petition to take the issue onto the floor of Parliament.

They welcomed Bills to re-nationalise the railways and



transfer the buses companies to Combine Authorities and Regional Mayors. They asked her to consider: a) cancelling the 9-30am bus curfew for pensioners during the school summer holidays and b) reducing the qualifying age for Concessionary Travel Passes from 67 to 60 as was the case in

Merseyside, Gt Manchester and Wales.

They made an unconditional offer to work in partnership to tackle pensioner poverty and improve the information and knowledge of the needs and requirements of the older generation.

Women Against State Pension Inequality. The campaign has received confirmation that the new Pensions Minister, will engage in discussions with them and representatives from the 1950s-women campaign. It will take place after MPs return to the House of Commons on September 2, following the summer recess ([Express](#)).



6. POVERTY.

Who can claim Pension Credit? You must be of State Pension age. Weekly income will need to be less than the minimum amount the government says you need to live on. For 2024/25, this is £218.15 for a single person and £332.95 for a couple ([IndependentAge](#)). [Click to see an example.](#)

The Household Support Fund – is due to expire at the end of September. This needs to be extended for at least six months to avoid an impending cliff-edge in support. The fund helps people struggling to buy food, pay bills and cover other essentials. Grants are limited to £250 ([LGA](#)).

7. SECURITY.

Regional Rioting. There were shocking scenes of violent disorder in Sunderland, Hartlepool and Middlesbrough. The North East Mayor told rioters they were "not welcome" in our communities and racism and prejudice "will not be tolerated" If you take part in violent disorder there will be severe consequences ([Chronicle](#)).



Antisocial behaviour falls by 14% as Northumbria Police and partners ramp up activity. Overall, across the whole of Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, there has been a 14% decrease in ASB-related reports, with notable decreases of 22% in Sunderland, and 17% in Northumberland, when compared to the same 3-month period last year ([PPC](#)).

Your Northumbria policing priorities consultation - You are invited to take part if you have access to a computer. It's open until the end of the month and only takes a few minutes [Just Click Here](#) ([PoliceandCrimeCommissioner](#)).



Drivers urged not to use QR codes when paying at car parks. This as 'quishing' becomes increasing threat. Unsuspecting drivers are being duped into entering credit and debit card information into fake websites using fake QR images. The switch to cashless car parking payments is accelerating the risks ([ThisIsMoney](#)).

8. TRANSPORT.

Bus operators react 'positively' to shake up. Two of the North East biggest bus operators have reacted positively to the north east mayors plan to strip them of power over routes, timetables, and fair prices. Services would be contracted out by the North East Combined Authority to operators ([Hexham/C](#)).

Shields Ferry. Plans to build a new £14.6m landing for the Shields Ferry at North Shields Fish Quay have been given the go-ahead by North East Mayor ([Shields/G](#)).

Major £1bn investment in transport improvements previously unveiled by Tees Valley Mayor is under threat. Transport investment has been placed under review by the current government after Chancellor identified a £22bn 'black hole' in terms of current public finances, ditching a number of previous policies ([D&STimes](#)).

Fast tracked! Journey towards improved regional transport gathers pace. Mayor promises £8.6m for Leamside Line business cases Washington Metro Loop will reconnect isolated communities and replace 1.7m car journeys a year Government smooths the way for local leaders to bring buses back under public control ([TheQT](#)).

Cost of business plan for Metro loop questioned. The £8.6m would be spent to outline plans for the Washington loop, which would run on the northern section of the mothballed Leamside Line. The project could cost up to £745m but is estimated to boost the region's economy by £90m a year ([BBC](#)).

Sean Fahey
NEPA Secretary



**If you want to know more contact the NEPA Secretary at
Email: nepacontact@gmail.com or Tel. 01670 361981**

[NEPA Website Click Here.](#)

Feel free to share.