

## In the News:

Hi, I am Keith Albans, Chair of Christians on Ageing. Here is my look back at some of stories which have made the news during the month of June and which seem relevant to the concerns of our members. Wherever possible I have included links to the original stories which will hopefully give you more information. As always, the comments on the stories are my own and will not necessarily reflect the views of CoA or its members.

There can only be one place to start this month, and that is in Parliament and the historic vote on the Assisted Dying Bill which took place on June 20<sup>th</sup>. In the end MPs voted by 314 votes to 291 votes to approve the draft legislation, which now goes to the House of Lords for further scrutiny and possible amendment before it returns to the Commons later in the year. Given the relative closeness of the vote, and the lobbying from both sides of the debate which preceded it, it's not surprising that the response has continued to be both impassioned and divided.

In the immediate aftermath of the vote, the bill's proposer Kim Leadbetter wrote of her sense of joy and relief: *"The road has been long and hard, and I am very aware that many others have been on that journey since long before I even became an MP. The question of whether to offer choice to people at the end of their lives was first raised in parliament in 1936 – almost a century ago. Since then, terminally ill people have pleaded repeatedly with MPs to heed their simple wish to have control and autonomy at the end of their lives. A courageous few have taken their cases to the courts, even while they confronted the prospect of their own imminent and inevitable deaths. The judges said it was for parliament to decide. Now, at last, the House of Commons has responded, and responded decisively to recognise the justice of their cause."*

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/20/britain-assisted-dying-vote-kim-leadbeater-labour-mp>

In a Facebook post to his constituents the Health Secretary, Wes Streeting, has warned that there is no budget to implement assisted dying. He added: *"Setting up this service will take time and money that is in short supply. Politics is about prioritising. It is a daily series of choices and trade-offs. I fear we've made the wrong one."* The government has suggested assisted dying would cost between £10.9m and £13.6m a year. Mr Streeting echoed the former Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, who said: *"There is no effective freedom to choose if the alternative option, the freedom to draw on high-quality end-of-life care, is not available."*

Another reaction to the vote in parliament was revealed by Chris Coughlan, Liberal Democrat MP for Dorking and Horley, when he said that his local Catholic priest publicly denied him Holy Communion after he voted in favour of assisted dying. Mr Coughlan said the priest warned him in an email four days before the vote that supporting the bill would make him "an obstinate public sinner" and complicit in "a murderous act," adding that Communion would be withheld if he went ahead. After the bill passed, the priest announced at Mass, in front of children who knew Mr Coughlan's own children, that the MP could no longer receive the sacrament. Mr Coughlan, a practising Catholic, condemned the move as "utterly disrespectful" to his family and the democratic process.

Another vote in Parliament with significant ethical and religious implications which received far less attention was the decision by MPs to effectively decriminalise abortion. In an amendment to the government's crime and policing bill, parliament voted to change the criminal laws that govern abortion in England and Wales so that women procuring a termination outside the legal framework cannot be prosecuted.

The framework of access to an abortion – including the need for two doctors' signatures, and the time limits at which terminations can be conducted – will remain the same and doctors who act outside the law will still face the threat of prosecution.

But women who terminate their pregnancy outside the rules, for example after the time limit or by buying pills online, will no longer face arrest or prison. The offence of inducing a miscarriage carries a maximum sentence of life.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jun/17/decriminalisation-abortion-vote-mps>

The outcome of the two votes in such close proximity led to the journalist Tim Stanley writing in the Daily Telegraph under the headline "It's official: our establishment has lost any sense of right or wrong." He suggested that *"the vanishing of Christian ethics has been catastrophic for Britain"* adding that *"the establishment has no coherent understanding of good and evil."*

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/06/22/assisted-dying-abortion-grooming-gangs-britain-deformed/>

The other major political story during the month was the growing rebellion amongst Labour MPs against proposed changes to the welfare and benefits system. The Government's many concessions eventually meant that they could win the vote in Parliament but the reverberations are likely to dominate the coming weeks.

Meanwhile there is evidence that age and education are far more likely to be indicators of political division than class. The British Social Attitudes survey, which has run annually since 1983, found that traditional class-based support for parties had diminished. *"The underpinnings of the system have disappeared, have been eroded. So class no longer equals vote. We now have multidimensional politics,"* said Prof Sir John Curtice, a senior research fellow at the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) and a co-author of the report. *"Trust in government, trust in politicians, is at an all-time low. So you can see all these things going on is creating an environment that means it looks more difficult for the Conservatives and Labour to hang on."*

The survey found that age and education were more often determining factors in voting intention. It said only 6% of 18- to 24-year-olds voted Conservative, compared with 36% of those aged 65 and over. Across age groups, just 5% of graduates voted for Reform UK, it found, compared with 25% of those with qualifications less than an A-level.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jun/25/class-age-education-dividing-lines-uk-politics-electoral-reform>

The headline, "Younger generations less likely to have dementia, study suggests" might seem pretty obvious at first reading, but the article itself reveals more interesting data. Dr Sabrina Lenzen, a co-author of the study from the University of Queensland's Centre for the Business and Economics of Health said, *"Younger generations are less likely to develop dementia at the same age as their parents or grandparents, and that's a hopeful sign."* The results come from a study based on data from 62,437 people aged 70 and over, collected from three long-running surveys covering the US, England and parts of Europe. As expected, the researchers found the prevalence of dementia increased by age among all birth cohorts, and in each of the three regions: UK, US and Europe. However, at a given age, people in more recent generations were less likely to have dementia compared with those in earlier generations. For example, in the US, among people aged 81 to 85, 25.1% of those born between 1890–1913 had dementia, compared to 15.5% of those born

between 1939–1943. Similar trends were seen in Europe and England, although less pronounced in the latter.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/jun/02/younger-generations-less-likely-dementia-study>

### **In other news...**

Along with the Post Office and the contaminated blood scandals, the on-going battle for compensation for the so-called Windrush generation seems to rumble on incessantly with little evidence of an end in sight. A review of 17 applications to the compensation fund revealed that claimants who challenged their awards after taking legal advice received huge increases in the amount offered. But while the Post Office and infected blood compensation schemes both offer applicants legal advice, the Windrush scheme is an exception among state compensation programmes in not providing this support. According to a study, co-written by the law reform charity Justice, the University of Sussex and the law firm Dechert, the scheme denied compensation to two-thirds of applicants, leading them to call for funded legal assistance for claimants.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/jun/16/windrush-scandal-victims-got-less-compensation-due-to-lack-of-legal-advice-funding-review-finds>

The headline “Lower energy costs make retirement less expensive” sounds like a statement of the obvious, but it introduced a story on the BBC website highlighting update figures for the income needed to fund various styles of retirement. The Pensions and Lifetime Savings Association suggest that the reduction in energy costs has had a disproportionately advantageous effect on those living on lower incomes, with a figure of £13,400 needed for a single person household’s basic lifestyle in retirement. The State Pension is now £11,973.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cj42022gqzwo>

<https://www.retirementlivingstandards.org.uk/>

Another illustration of the differing circumstances in which we age comes from the Centre for Ageing Better’s latest report which reveals how few homes in the UK are fully accessible, and the huge regional variations, with some residents’ chances of finding an accessible home six times lower than others. They report that Older people living in the North East or the East Midlands are six times less likely to be living in a fully accessible home compared to people living in London, while only one in 25 homes (4%) headed by someone aged between 55 and 64 in the North East or the East Midlands have all four accessibility features compared to almost one in four (23%) in the capital.

[https://ageing-better.org.uk/news/postcode-lottery-finding-accessible-home?utm\\_source=Ageing+Better+Email+Updates&utm\\_campaign=34c9149a98-AB\\_News\\_Jun\\_26\\_2025&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_-34c9149a98-375066448](https://ageing-better.org.uk/news/postcode-lottery-finding-accessible-home?utm_source=Ageing+Better+Email+Updates&utm_campaign=34c9149a98-AB_News_Jun_26_2025&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-34c9149a98-375066448)

And finally, some correspondence in the Guardian at the beginning of the month arose from an article highlighting the link between exercise and ageing better. Its sample ended at the age of 80, evoking some spirited responses from those well in advance of that age! “*What about those over 90 like myself, 94, still active on the rowing machine (11 minutes 16 seconds for 2,000 metres)?*” raged David Bentley while Shirley Foster added, “*I and my 80-plus-year-old friends fell about (voluntarily) laughing when we read that we can consider ourselves “in good form” if we can walk unaided for 10*

*minutes. Since many of us regularly hike, garden, swim, cycle and play tennis, we clearly need to examine much more closely the fitness standards for our age group.”*

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2025/jun/06/what-about-fitness-tips-for-those-of-us-aged-90-and-above>

In a similar vein, Prof Devi Sridhar, Chair of global public health at the University of Edinburgh, and the author of *How Not to Die (Too Soon)* wrote a more detailed examination of the issues under the headline “*It’s my goal to live to 100 – and it’s not just diet and exercise that will help me achieve it.*”

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/jun/07/live-to-100-diet-exercise-long-life>