

## 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 August 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.

Traditionally August is known in the media as the 'silly season' because the shortage of actual stories and events can lead to the most unlikely stories being given space they barely deserve! I am not sure that 2025 lived up to that brief particularly, but there was certainly a shortage of major stories relevant to our constituency.

Possibly the most unlikely, though hardly silly, story this August came under the headline '*Rare find in Devon brings back monks' music after five centuries*' and concerned the discovery of music from Buckland Abbey in Devon which dates back to the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. Professor James Clark from the University of Exeter made the discovery while researching the Abbey for the National Trust. The themes of the music are heavy – the threats from disease and crop failures, not to mention powerful rulers – but the polyphonic style is bright and joyful, a contrast to the sort of mournful chants most associated with monks. Clark said it was clear that, as well as worshipping God, the monastery was trying to impress patrons by creating wonderful music. *"Monasteries were competing in a very crowded marketplace for investment from patrons. One of the strategies was to upgrade the music. Buckland bought in expertise to turn what may have been a rather ragged choir into something more professional. They were being responsive to cultural change, keeping up with the times and impress their audience."*

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2025/aug/16/monastic-music-that-survived-henry-viii-dissolution-brought-back-to-life>

As we enter the autumn, many of us will be summoned for a variety of jabs, protecting us against flu, Covid and a variety of other illnesses. It is interesting therefore to read that one of the side-effects of the shingles jab may be to reduce stroke or heart attack risk. In the first study of its kind, results suggest that the risk reduction may be as much as 20%. Most countries tend to only recommend the vaccine to older people or immunosuppressed adults but the findings suggest it could have cardiovascular protective effects in adults as young as 18. Prof Bryan Williams, the chief scientific and medical officer at the British Heart Foundation, not involved with the research, welcomed the findings but said further research was needed. He said: *"There is great interest in studies suggesting the shingles vaccine may reduce the risk of cardiovascular events, although this analysis is largely based on observational studies, which cannot demonstrate cause and effect. We know that shingles can cause inflammation in the body, and that inflammation is a culprit in many heart and circulatory conditions which can lead to heart attacks and strokes. By preventing shingles, vaccination could therefore be protective."*

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/aug/28/shingles-vaccine-heart-cardiovascular-medical-research>

Another story based on research findings suggests that Omega fatty acid levels are lower in women with Alzheimer's disease. An analysis of blood samples from Alzheimer's patients and healthy individuals, revealed levels of unsaturated fats, such as those containing omega fatty acids, were up to 20% lower in women with the disease. The low levels were not seen in men with Alzheimer's, suggesting there may be sex differences in how the disease takes hold and affects a

person's physiology. Dr Cristina Legido-Quigley, a senior author on the study at King's College London and published in the Alzheimer's & Dementia journal said, *"The difference between the sexes was the most shocking and unexpected finding. There's an indication that having less of these compounds could be causal in Alzheimer's, but we need a clinical trial to confirm that."*

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2025/aug/20/women-with-alzheimers-have-unusually-low-omega-fatty-acid-levels-study-finds>

Another health-related story says that researchers are calling for better support for middle-aged and older autistic people after a review found that 90% of autistic people aged over 50 in Britain are either undiagnosed or misdiagnosed. Greater awareness of autism and improved assessments globally mean it is typically spotted in childhood today. But in past decades autistic people were often forced to navigate middle and old age without the support a diagnosis can unlock.

The review into ageing across the autism spectrum found that people in the UK faced widespread difficulties with employment, relationships and milestone events such as menopause and retirement. They consistently suffered from poorer mental and physical health.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/aug/29/older-autistic-people-need-more-help-after-years-of-misdiagnosis-review-finds>

The Centre for Ageing Better has commented on the UK government's new Industrial Strategy, and in particular on how unlike the 2017 strategy, which explicitly identified demographic ageing as a key challenge and opportunity shaping the UK's future, this new strategy makes only passing reference to it. Elaine Smith, their Deputy Director for Work, wrote that *"The UK's population is ageing rapidly, with far-reaching implications for jobs, spending, public services, housing, transport, and the wider economy. In 2022, nearly one in five people in the UK was aged 65 or over; by 2072, this is projected to rise to more than one in four. This has implications for our country's workforce but it also has implications for what our economy does: the services we offer, the communities, businesses and places we need to build. Ageing is not a future issue. It is a structural reality already reshaping our economy and society. By overlooking it, the government risks missing a major opportunity to drive innovation, unlock new markets, and future-proof growth. The future of our economy is older and an industrial strategy that fails to recognise this will fail to deliver the growth ambitions that we all desperately share."*

[https://ageing-better.org.uk/blogs/significant-gap-governments-2025-industrial-strategy?utm\\_source=Ageing+Better+Email+Updates&utm\\_campaign=096cc7725e-AB\\_News\\_28\\_Aug\\_25&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_-34c9149a98-375066448](https://ageing-better.org.uk/blogs/significant-gap-governments-2025-industrial-strategy?utm_source=Ageing+Better+Email+Updates&utm_campaign=096cc7725e-AB_News_28_Aug_25&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-34c9149a98-375066448)

Another story from the world of work came under the headline *"Older Workers irked by noisy younger staff 'not victims of harassment'"* and concerns the outcome of an employment tribunal. It dismissed age harassment claims filed by a 66-year-old booking administrator who complained about "noisy and boisterous" younger colleagues, ruling that *their chatty behaviour was not age-related harassment but a difference in work attitudes*. The tribunal found that the conduct was not directed at the claimant because of her age and did not create a hostile environment, concluding that her frustration stemmed from differing expectations of professionalism in a multi-generational team.

<https://www.theguardian.com/money/2025/aug/19/young-chatty-workers-disturbing-older-ones-not-age-harassment-tribunal-rules>

The Centre for Ageing Better has launched a new project with the Fabian Housing Centre, a major research and policy programme, to help shape the implementation of the government's housing strategy. The new project will help define the critical policies the country needs to ensure people can remain independent in their own home as they age. The research programme, which will work in collaboration with key housing stakeholders, policymakers and those affected by the housing crisis, aims to develop practical but ambitious ideas to build 1.5 million homes, tackle the housing crisis, and create great places to live. The **A Vision of Ageing at Home** research project will undertake primary research with older people through focus groups. It will also review existing policies regarding the improvement of homes and the impact on older people.

[https://ageing-better.org.uk/news/new-project-fabian-society-places-older-peoples-voices?utm\\_source=Ageing+Better+Email+Updates&utm\\_campaign=096cc7725e-AB\\_News\\_28\\_Aug\\_25&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_-34c9149a98-375066448](https://ageing-better.org.uk/news/new-project-fabian-society-places-older-peoples-voices?utm_source=Ageing+Better+Email+Updates&utm_campaign=096cc7725e-AB_News_28_Aug_25&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-34c9149a98-375066448)

And finally, the date of the budget has been announced as November 26<sup>th</sup>, and the government's need to raise revenue is bound to attract speculation around who is likely to be hit the hardest. One possible source of income is to amend the Inheritance Tax system, and ideas on the table are said to include a review of the rules on giving away assets, with one possibility being the introduction of a lifetime cap on how much an individual can donate.

<https://www.theguardian.com/money/2025/aug/13/inheritance-tax-how-does-it-work-and-what-may-be-changing>