

## 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 November, 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.

One major story which has re-emerged after a quiet few months concerns the issue of overpayment of carer's allowance. The benefit is paid to about 1 million unpaid carers – people who carry out the arduous and demanding task of providing round-the-clock care for frail, sick or disabled loved ones. It is the UK's lowest-value benefit, worth £83.30 a week. However, it is a so-called "cliff edge" benefit meaning that a carer who earned £1 more than the threshold for 52 weeks would pay back not £52 but £4,258.80. Significant numbers of people have been caught out, usually through working overtime or taking an extra shift. The error, which was originally brought to the attention of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) in 2016 has seen people being pursued for repayments and, in some cases, being criminalised. Following a year-long investigation by The Guardian a report was commissioned and its findings published in the last week of November.

Hundreds of thousands of vulnerable unpaid carers will now have their cases reassessed as the review concluded they had been left with huge debts because of government failure and maladministration. Ministers have promised to cancel or reduce penalties that were wrongly issued after the review concluded many were the result of official error rather than "wilful rule-breaking". However, the government has stopped short of offering compensation to those affected. It is understood compensation was both considered by the review and by ministers but is not one of the published recommendations of the review, headed by disability policy expert Liz Sayce.

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/nov/25/dwp-to-reassess-hundreds-of-thousands-of-cases-in-carers-allowance-scandal>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/nov/25/outdated-and-ever-less-fit-for-purpose-five-takeaways-from-carers-allowance-report>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/nov/25/the-carers-allowance-scandal-a-timeline>

Meanwhile the month's news has been dominated by the build-up to the Budget, followed by days of analysis and fall-out. While I am somewhat suspicious of Budget analyses which purport to highlight its effect on Older People – as we know that term covers people in a wide variety of circumstances – I am grateful to the Centre of Ageing Better who have brought together some of the policies and changes which will affect how many approach retirement or live in later life.

Their Chief Executive, Dr Carole Easton picked out some policies likely to have the biggest impact on older people. These include:

- *A £150 cut to the average household energy bill from April 2026 as the government removes a large proportion of energy efficiency subsidies off electricity bills and scraps the energy company obligation scheme. The government will also provide an additional £1.5 billion capital investment to tackle fuel poverty through its warm homes plan.*

- *The freeze on the thresholds for when people start paying different levels of income tax has been extended and will result in 1.7 million people paying more tax. But the government has said that pensioners whose sole income is the basic or new State Pension will not have to pay the tax due when the state pension rises above the £12,570 threshold for paying 20% income tax.*
- *Basic and new state pension payments will go up by 4.8% from April, more than the current rate of inflation, under the triple lock.*
- *Salary-sacrificed pension contributions above an annual £2,000 threshold will no longer be exempt from national insurance from April 2029.*

Responding to the on-going freezing of Income Tax Thresholds, Dr Easton said: “The government’s decision... means that, even with mitigations for those solely reliant on basic or new State Pension, there is the potential that pensioners with low incomes will be required to begin paying tax directly to HMRC. Not only does this chip into meagre household budgets that are already being stretched to breaking point, but it will also create an additional administrative burden for millions of people. The move is also likely to act as a deterrent to those one in eight people over state pension age who are still in employment to work additional hours if they will be liable to 40% tax rates and so is likely to reduce the labour supply of older workers.”

[https://ageing-better.org.uk/news/ageing-better-responds-governments-autumn-budget?utm\\_source=Ageing+Better+Email+Updates&utm\\_campaign=5d15afb0f5-AB\\_News\\_27\\_nov\\_25&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_-34c9149a98-375066448](https://ageing-better.org.uk/news/ageing-better-responds-governments-autumn-budget?utm_source=Ageing+Better+Email+Updates&utm_campaign=5d15afb0f5-AB_News_27_nov_25&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-34c9149a98-375066448)

Sticking with events in Westminster, the on-going scrutiny of the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill continues in the House of Lords, with a record number of amendments being tabled and considered. Further time has been allowed for the process to continue, but there is beginning to be a lot of extra-parliamentary activity, with peers being accused of deliberately seeking to obstruct the bill’s passage into law. The question of whether the upper House has the authority to go against the will of the lower chamber is in itself a matter of constitutional debate, alongside the very important issues before them.

While not related to this legislation, there was a fascinating, and to my mind entirely timely, article in the Observer in early November. Written by Melanie Reid, a writer about disability and her life as a tetraplegic person following a horse-riding accident, the headline says ***Euphemisms for death just kill me*** while the sub-heading proclaims ***Language matters. When I’m dead, don’t you dare say I’ve – horror of horrors – become ‘unalive’.*** Some people of faith may try to avoid suggesting someone is ‘dead’ – believing them to be alive in another realm – but they have undoubtedly ‘died’, and the article lists several familiar euphemisms which people have adopted to try and soften the blow. One part that sent a shiver down my spine reads: “Bang up to date, I have come across the unlovely “unalive” on social media, a neologism that confirms mine is a losing battle with the algorithms. Google’s chatbot advises that “died” on TikTok (and Instagram and YouTube) may be censored or flagged for review by the platforms’ automated systems, which can’t distinguish between someone planning mass murder and someone who has lost their mother. It suggests “unalive” as an alternative.”

<https://observer.co.uk/news/columnists/article/why-death-euphemisms-kill-me>

Another related article addresses the question of the state of palliative care services in the UK – an issue frequently raised by opponents of the Kim Leadbetter bill. Writing in the Guardian, Rachel Clarke, a Palliative Care specialist reminds us of the dire state of the hospice sector. “Across the country, hospices are being forced to cut staff, reduce their bed numbers and slash community services for dying people who wish to be cared for at home. The result is a postcode lottery of care in which your chances of receiving high-quality palliative care hinge on variables that include the level of deprivation where you live and the extent to which your local NHS management chooses to prioritise patients with terminal illnesses. A month ago, for example, Arthur Rank Hospice in Cambridgeshire revealed that Cambridge University Hospitals had elected to withdraw £829,000 of annual funding, [forcing the hospice to close nine of its 21 beds](#). “Essentially, this now means that over 200 people a year will no longer have the option of being cared for in the comfort of our hospice and instead will sadly be dying in a busy hospital,” Arthur Rank’s CEO, Sharon Allen, stated. The NHS trust responded by saying that the hospice beds were “[very poor value for money](#)”.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/nov/10/palliative-care-end-life-death-crisis>

There have been several articles this month casting light on the contemporary experience of ageing and living longer. So, we are informed that the number of centenarians in Italy continues to rise – the number has doubled since 2009. Various reasons are suggested – “the Mediterranean diet has long been thought to be the main ingredient for longevity among Italians, combined with strong social connections and a healthcare system that is generally considered to be good.” Nevertheless, the article also points out that “the centenarian population is rapidly growing across EU countries, with the number of people in the bloc aged 100 or more forecast to reach almost half a million by 2050, up from 96,600 in 2019. France, Italy and Greece have the highest ratio of centenarians per capita. In the UK, the number of people aged 100 and over doubled from 8,300 in 2004 to 16,600 in 2024, [according to figures released in October](#).” The article ends by pointing out that alongside this growth in the number of the very old, the birthrate in Italy is at its lowest point since unification in 1861.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/nov/07/italy-centenarians-amount-milestone>

Closer to home comes news that whereas many people assume most older people are homeowners, the reality is very different, with a significant rise in the number of over-60’s living in rented accommodation, many of whom are living in shared housing. “According to the English Housing Survey, just 6% of households headed by someone over 65 are privately renting. But the Pensions Policy Institute (PPI) forecasts that this will almost treble to 17% by 2040. Online rental platform SpareRoom says that the era of flatsharing in later life may already be upon us: just 2.7% of its users were aged over 55 a decade ago, compared to 7.1% in 2024.”

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/nov/13/rise-older-renters-housing-crisis-home-ownership>

Betty Reid Soskin was not a name familiar to me, but reading her 104-year-old life story certainly makes me want to meet her! The article’s headline says it all: ***I found my feet in midlife, became a park ranger at 85 – and retired happily at 100*** – she has certainly packed a lit in!

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2025/nov/10/oldest-park-ranger-85-retired-civil-rights-betty-reid-soskin>

Incidentally the article comes from a stream in the Guardian which looks for people whose lives have taken a new direction after the age of 65. If that's you, why not have a look and see if they might be interested?!

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/may/04/tell-us-has-your-life-taken-a-new-direction-after-the-age-of-65>

The actor Morgan Freeman is now aged 88 and he has been in more than 100 films during a long career. In this article he looks back at his life and career, and the perspective of age certainly shines through a lot of what he has to say.

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/ng-interactive/2025/nov/10/morgan-freeman-interview-nelson-mandela-six-decades-on-screen>

And finally, the ongoing search for treatments and medications to address dementia in its various forms received a setback recently with the news that trials involving an existing drug used in the treatment of type-2 diabetes has been aborted, triggering a significant fall in the manufacturer's share price. Novo Nordisk, which began the trials two years ago, had always treated the study as an outside bet but one which had the potential to land big rewards.

<https://news.sky.com/story/ozempic-makers-shares-plunge-after-failed-alzheimers-trial-13474892>