

MUCH Newsletter Summer 2025

Sustainable Living for Over 50s

Building A Community for Our Futures



The summer solstice is celebrated in many different ways around the northern hemisphere. Whether you watched, or even took part in, the festivities at Stonehenge, or like me took part in some other event - I was at a local Clean Air Day event singing with a community choir, I hope you enjoyed the longest day of 2025.

We mentioned previously that we were introducing Associate Membership for MUCH. This is for people who would like to support the group in practical ways but who don't expect to live in cohousing themselves. The website [membership enquiries form](#) has now been tweaked accordingly! Please do get in touch to find out more.

A couple of potential sites across South Manchester have come to our attention recently, and we are following those up with interest. It's a good time to get involved.

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In Our Nature

by Lydia, MUCH member

On 29th April I attended a special Climate Change meeting of Age Friendly Manchester in the Central Library. "In Our Nature".

The theme of resilience to new weather patterns of extreme heat were being amply demonstrated outside on the sweltering city centre streets. The Resilience Officer from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority was very clear that our communities are not well prepared for excess heat – or for floods! (Half the schools in England are at serious risk of flooding – how near is your nearest school?!) She seemed to think that older people would know more about dealing with these emergencies and that we could be a real asset in our neighbourhood.

However, most people round my table were not aware of the immediate impact of climate change. We talked about the role of trees. One lady said she had just taken a tree OUT of her garden because it gave too much shade and dropped leaves on her lawn. The group was more concerned about the government cuts to benefits and winter fuel allowances.



I didn't talk about older people's Co-housing being designed to INCLUDE shade and water security with rain gardens and grey water systems to re-use scarce water. I thought they didn't want to hear about my obsessive throwing of washing up water onto the trees outside the kitchen door while it has been an unnamed drought!

BUT it did occur to me that our 10 GM local Councils COULD make much more of new planning regulations for insulation, energy efficiency and flood proofing. It could be a real Educational Opportunity and we can help with that. But not if we are seen as Eco Freaks! So let's aim to mainstream our well researched co-housing design knowledge and see how we can influence our Local Authority to embed Climate Action in the way we build and maintain our existing housing stock. We could be the Elders' Action Research team for Resilience - Greater Manchester Combined Authority

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I'll be meeting the Manchester College team to talk about how we can increase the training that is needed in the construction trades. Let's own our expertise and knowledge, not just moan about things being fudged and badly done.

Living with a heat pump

by Sian, MUCH member

My heat pump was installed a year ago, replacing a gas combi boiler.

The heating is 'on' when needed 24/7, even in June. In the middle of winter it was sometimes on permanently, but during the summer months it's mostly off, and only comes on overnight when cooler outside (costing pennies at this time of year). I had been using my gas boiler like this before I got a heat pump anyway, to check whether my house was insulated well enough for a heat pump to heat my house properly. I decided it was, although there is plenty more work in the planning.



About half the radiators have been replaced for bigger ones, which means each room is heated to the same temperature.

The biggest change for me is having a hot water tank, and the variable temperature of water coming out of the kitchen tap for washing up – but I'm getting used to it!

I should mention that the hot water tank has taken over my airing cupboard, so I've had to find new homes for towels and bed linens accumulated over many years.

Apart from the combi, my only other gas appliance was a hob, which I have swapped for an induction hob, allowing me to have the gas meter removed last September, and saving me the cost of the gas standing charges.

Heating with a heat pump has kept my home warmer than it used to be and more comfortable all year round, although it has cost me a little more than a gas boiler would.

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But more importantly for me 'getting off gas' has reduced my carbon emissions more than anything else which I've done. Electricity generated in the UK is not yet zero carbon, but the proportion is increasing every year. Now that I am not burning gas at home, my carbon emissions will continue to fall.

HousingLIN Conference March 2025 Leeds

A member of MUCH attended this event and found it very interesting. It reinforced the views of MUCH who have researched and explored best practise in design of housing for older people for over ten years.

Professor Julianne Meyer spoke of the findings of the Older People's Housing Taskforce, making the following key points among others:

- Intergenerational communities foster social connections, reducing reliance on the state. Supporting ageing in place improves well-being, prevents hospital admissions, and frees underoccupied homes.
- A new model is needed to serve lower- and middle-income groups.

While MUCH members have an ambition to build homes for a small community of people aged 50 and over, we are also clear that we want to be part of a vibrant local community. Many of us fall in the gap between the many good affordable housing schemes for older people being built by Housing Associations, and the private retirement housing that often come with high annual service charges.

It was good to see Elaine Unegbu, Chair of the Age Friendly Manchester Older People's Board speaking on another of the panels.

She spoke of homes which provide safe spaces, give peace of mind, prolong independence and allow older people to age well in place. She commented on older people who live in rented accommodation, often in dangerous and precarious conditions, and on those older people who own their own home, but are more likely to be property rich and cash poor. And on people from Black and Ethnic Minority (BAME) backgrounds who are more likely to be living in housing deprivation and poverty which stops them thriving.

She acknowledged that the lack of commitment to repairs whilst living on a fixed income, can cause fear and anxiety, and that relocation often results in a breakdown in social cohesion.

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She was concerned about the lack of clear unambiguous information about housing options and the digital divide, while the biggest flaw in many inclusion policies is the lack of attention given to ageism and not properly recognising age as a protected equalities characteristic.

Where good housing is being delivered there is a measurable impact of health and wellbeing. More from the conference report :

<https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Events/housing-lin-annual-conference/housing-lin-annual-conference-2025/leeds/>

Cohousing in the news

There is still plenty of national interest in Cohousing.

An article in Architects Journal asks “What can we learn from a group who’ve established and sustained a radical form of living together for nearly 10 years?”

See [Revisit: How Older Women’s Co-Housing made New Ground](#) to find out.

Bridport Cohousing in Dorset, now known as Hazelmead, has been in the news quite a bit recently after being joint winners of the 2025 Pineapple award for Healthy Homes.

The Observer recently reviewed Bridport Cohousing : [Review: Hazelmead, Dorset – the UK’s largest co-housing project](#)

Architect Sam Goss of Barefoot Architects has written a case study on Bridport Cohousing : [Housing LIN Case Study 175: Hazelmead, Bridport Cohousing: More affordable, more sustainable and more neighbourly homes for Dorset](#)

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