

Evidence Base to End Homelessness

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

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The Houses of Parliament are restricting non-essential access. The Speakers were concerned to maintain parliamentary business. I am sorry that long planned visits by people near and far have been cancelled or postponed.

This week there have been three-minute science presentations in the Upper Waiting Room, a pleasant exhibition space. The first I saw was by the Centre for Homelessness Impact. It is a What Works Intervention Tool that weighs the strength of evidence, financial cost and impact of implemented policies to tackle homelessness.

The researcher made notes when I spoke in detail of the activities of our local Turning Tides charity, founded as the Worthing Churches Homelessness Projects and about the Emmaus communities with which I was also involved over the years.

Before election to the House of Commons, I chaired the Church of England's Children's Society with its 100 projects and 1,000 caring staff. We had independent academic research assessment of each of our new ideas. There was monitoring of our safe house for runaway children, of Bob Holman's innovative Family Centres and the semi-independent living for vulnerable older teenagers whose activities were too advanced for their years.

Tracey Brown is one of the people who should be better known. For nearly 20 years she has directed Sense about Science, leading work on transparency of evidence used by governments in policy, ensuring there is public access to the evidence and reasoning available to decision makers.

Her team help us to understand youth employment prospects after mental health problems (LSE), whether industry supply chains are decarbonising (Imperial College), how to gain evidence when little is known including insights from the pandemic (National Institute for Health Research), and the contribution of physics to net zero (Institute of Physics).

Scientific evidence pointed to climate change: COP26 is based on work that followed Joe Farman's initial discovery of ozone depletion when today's children's parents were children.

On Monday I joined assembly with junior pupils at Our Lady of Sion, the school where I had been selected as local candidate for parliament. Worthing College and Durrington Sea Scouts are also involved in Parliament Week.

It was rewarding to respond to questions from interested girls and boys. Some were new to the school; it was impressive to see how every one had adapted to the ways of the school, allowing all to learn and to contribute. I thank Tamara Pearson and her colleagues, together with teachers in every school, for broadening the minds and the horizons of succeeding generations.

At the higher level, on Saturday I was with UK and American students meeting the sponsor of a trans-Atlantic exchange and with Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge including Dame Sally Davies, the former chief medical officer. She is now leading the international Trinity Challenge that develops smarter cross sectoral data and approaches to analytics to respond fast and effectively to infectious diseases.

The meeting that matters most to many was on Tuesday when the Economist senior editor Helen Joyce, author of the best-selling book TRANS, spoke sympathetically of trans people while explaining that women and most in the LGB Alliance risk having their rights, safety and feeling of fairness and equality taken away if gender identity overrules sex.

She was joined by Dr Nicola Williams of Fair Play for Women, the research scientist in human biology who writes and speaks on sex-based rights for women and girls. Most protestors who object to their work or who demonstrated wrongly against Dr Kathleen Stock at Sussex University, have neither read nor understood the issues.

I will confront those who are careless of the needs of the homeless and those who think rational women are dangerous extremists.