

## Good News and Opportunities to Help

*Sir Peter Bottomley MP*

*Worthing Herald Article*

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Martin Luther King Junior said that a person called to be a street sweeper 'should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, "Here lived a great street sweeper who did the job well".'

When I started at university, I had worked each holiday for years. During the 1963 six weeks of ice and snow (following a similar period of smog in London), I shovelled with a great professional to keep the pavements around Parliament safe. He was of the Windrush generation. A little over twenty years later, I was appointed minister of roads. With a cheerful photograph of the pair of us, I visited our council depot. Sadly, he had died a year earlier. I welcome the Home Secretary's statements about the Windrush scandal on Tuesday. I have known many of that generation and I have respected them.

I was honoured to give the address at the funeral of the Rustington road sweeper in the church of St Peter and St Paul. We had been friends; I had visited him in hospital and in the hospice. I have been familiar with the valued range of hospice services from the time my doctor aunt retired from her life's work as a leading hospital surgeon to marry at the age of 64 and to work on medical records at St Christopher's, founded by Dame Cecily Saunders, founder of the modern hospice movement. In my early time as MP, I visited Mother Teresa's hospice in Calcutta.

I commend the newsletter of our St Barnabas House with the Chestnut Tree children's hospices services have continued through the current times of difficulties. It is good that central government provided finance to help hospices as the range of fund raising events was restricted. It is great news that half the St Barnabas shops have opened again; they will be followed soon by the rest. Trading news is good.

The prime minister has confirmed the announcement on the lifting and adjustment to restrictions that helped to reduce the impact of the spread of C-19. West Sussex was not hit as hard as some areas. It is sadly true that a number of factors combine to make some groups most vulnerable. The direct impact can be on health. The indirect penalty can be linked to patterns of employment.

Data in the United States show that Hispanic women and men, with Asian women, are twice as likely to have lost their employment when compared with white men, being more likely to work in the hospitality sector which lost nearly 40% of its workforce.

In London, for reasons that are not yet fully clear, the toll has been heavy on east London's Somalis. The female director of the Ashaadibi mosque reports they have lost 10 of 200 who pray.

It is clear to me that my role as a local MP include responsibilities for the well-being and lives of all people around our shared country and our common world. I support the aim of the Black Lives Matter campaign to create a world free of anti-Blackness. I am aware that some in the Black Lives Matter movement have been quoted as opposing capitalism. That is not my choice. I have supported the core aims of the campaign since before it began – to end discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity.

One of my greatest friends describes the UK as one of the most tolerant, inclusive and friendly countries. We know that many British people were involved and profited from the slave trade. We also have a good record of giving refuge and sanctuary to the oppressed of all colours and creeds - of standing up against injustice, including totalitarianism and fascism. We must not deny and ignore our past but, learn from it to take opportunities to do better.

Our focus should not be on destroying remnants of our past - instead we should channel our energy into forging a better future.