

# REVIEW ARGUS

## School move is positive for pupils

### COMMENT

IF WE accept that local councils are increasingly being kept out of the loop when it comes to opening new schools then today's news is good.

The Government has promised to fund a new school in the city under the watchful eye of the University of Brighton.

One of the big fears on free schools was that they could be sponsored or run by people or groups who would raise the eyebrows in a bad way.

But if done properly academies and free schools have shown they can work very well.

Sponsored academies, which are essentially run in the same way as free schools, outperformed state schools nationally by seven per cent in getting five A\* to C grades at GCSE including English and Maths.

There are certain companies or even religious groups that would cause controversy and certainly debate.

But if we are to carry on without local authorities being able to open old style comprehensives then to have a top educational institution with its heart in the city is surely the best alternative.

Many pupils will effectively be heading through school life towards university life.

So while some sponsors will have a positive impact by gearing a specialism to science, engineering, sport or some other discipline, surely the university will help the transition towards further study and – let's hope – career success.

Having our universities here does pose its housing problems.

But in terms of adding to the economy and the diversity and cultural input provided they are a huge boost to the city.

And now with a foray into our schools the positives continue.

## Let's be brave in our fight to end homelessness, and be known for our response to the devastating issue



**FOLLOWING stories in The Argus about the number of homeless people dying on our streets Dr Tim Worthley, who helps those sleeping rough every week, explains what we can do as individuals and collectively.**

**H**OMELESSNESS is a polarising issue. Seeing people sleeping on the streets is unsettling.

It can even frighten or disturb us. "What if they're dead?", "Should I stop and check on them?" – no one wants to be the person who passed by a young woman or elderly man as they were dying.

But if we do stop and check on them, what can we do? "What if they ask me for more money?" we might wonder, "or a place to stay. What if they shout or swear at me? What if there is nothing I can do?"

All of this in the few seconds it takes to walk past a fellow human in distress.

And they are in distress. Undeniably so. Which is sad, deeply sad. I think it is that sadness which creates the tension in our responses. How can we be part of a society in which some people can be so abandoned, so vulnerable, so sad? Better to blame that person. Or to blame society – the system. Or perhaps to minimise the difference we can make. Ultimately we flee from the sadness, because the reality of their sadness is too great in that moment for us to hold in our hearts and our minds.

Which is ironic. Because in my experience many of the homeless people who I have cared for in the last six years are also fleeing from sadness. From the sadness of abandonment, abuse, grief or loss. From the sadness caused by their own actions when they were hurting and vulnerable. From the hopelessness arising from the fear that they will never be able to be a part of the story that they see being played out before them day after day. What must

it feel like to believe that you are of no consequence and never will be? To feel less human.

Because if you were truly and fully equal, you would not be kicked or urinated on when you slept in the town centre. Your tent would not be destroyed. You would not be placed in accommodation with no lighting, heating, locks, working windows or clean linen. You would not be threatened with eviction for asking a friend to keep you company in your hour of need, or for briefly visiting your adult child with learning disabilities whose home you had to flee from to escape domestic violence. You would not be looked past, or through, as you sat on the street not knowing how your life brought you to this point, or how you will ever escape it.

And so they flee from these horrors. And we flee from their sadness.

Of course it is not all sad. There is a tremendous amount of love and compassion being shown by my many colleagues. And we see healing of brokenness; we see people being given the strength to confront their sadness and to escape their circumstances. Becoming integrated into society, and in turn being able to use their unique life experiences to care for others.

I am only one of an army of people trying to care for the countless hidden homeless in Brighton. I use the word "army" because it can often feel as if we are on the front-line. Surrounded as we are by brokenness, violence and – tragically – death. We sometimes find ourselves in the desperate position of deciding which gravely unwell or vulnerable person to offer housing

to. I remember Brian, who told me once that despite his depression, he would manage. He would be OK so long as he was never street homeless again. "I would rather be dead", he told me, than be on the streets again. That was the last time I saw him. Two weeks later he walked into the sea. He had heard that day that his hostel might be closing.

So what is the answer? Firstly I think that we need to be brave enough to not flee from the sadness. Sometimes the most powerful thing you can give someone who is homeless is your name and your time. Because you then see them as a peer and an equal. You bestow upon them the dignity of being known, and perhaps offer them the hope of something better.

Secondly we need a more integrated system caring for the homeless and vulnerably housed in Brighton. There have been some exciting developments in the last few years, and the Clinical Commissioning Group has developed a vision for how a multidisciplinary homeless polyclinic could revolutionise the current situation.

A "one stop shop" pulling in teams and professionals from across the city, working together to support individuals, provide outreach, and properly address the homelessness crisis in our city. This could make a real difference, but we need a building.

Thirdly we need more accommodation to offer, and that accommodation needs to be of a far better quality. Easy enough to say, but incredibly difficult to deliver.

This is only the start, and I know I could be criticised for being unre-



### The work of one kind soul to help the needy

DR TIM WORTHLEY, who works from the Brighton Homeless Healthcare centre in Morley Street, previously told The Argus his own practice alone has 1,400 homeless people on its register. He said 21 of his patients died in 2015 – and that all the deaths were preventable.

Dr Worthley said he wrote today's review "in honour of Brian's memory; and of Ian, Jonny, Tommy and Catherine. Of Marty, Steve and Mark. Of Carl and Kerrie".

"And to prevent many more names from being added to that roll call, I and my colleagues ask for your help," he added.

alistic. This is not a simple problem to fix. But I choose to believe that we could do things better. That we do not have to accept the status quo. That our wonderful city could generously come together to humanise the system, and to offer humanity to the broken on our streets, and in temporary accommodation. Wouldn't it be wonderful if Brighton were not known for its "homeless problem" and drug-related deaths, but rather for its response.

## Farce as minister denies being sent report he's holding

THE debate in Parliament on the killing of innocent people in Yemen was accompanied by what could only be described as a farce of responses and comments.

The government minister Tobias Ellwood claimed he had not been sent a copy of the report prepared by the United Nations.

He then produced a copy of the report, with "United Kingdom" clearly printed on the cover, and claimed it was a leaked copy and so he had not responded to it.

### Opinion Ian Chisnall



From across the political spectrum came Hilary Benn who had managed to read the report (leaked or not) and described how it refers to the targeting of weddings and other social events by the Yemen government.

This is the same government that is supported by Saudi Arabia with weapons we have supplied to them, weapon sales that Mr Benn wanted to suspend.

Mr Ellwood then said he had read the report and that he intended to "discuss" its contents with the Saudis when he next meets them.

Paul Flynn, Labour, suggested that we must not get drawn into a centuries-old dispute in Yemen, while Gerald Howarth, Conservative, argued that there are too many jobs

dependent on weapons supplied to the Saudi government for us to suspend sales, and pointing out that they are centuries-old allies.

It is clear our role in the Middle East is one of intervention on many levels, that we are happy to sell weapons to nations we consider as allies and drop our own bombs on other nations nearby. We need Parliament to get a grip on foreign policy and morality of arms sales.

**Ian Chisnall is a blogger at [ianchisnall.wordpress.com](http://ianchisnall.wordpress.com).**