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THE BIG ISSUE

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Living on the streets at 15. Now one of Britain’s top firefighters. Sabrina Cohen-Hatton with her incredible, life-affirming story.

page 20
Rose Theatre Kingston, Neil Laidlaw, Daniel Hodgdon and Birmingham Repertory Theatre Present

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Hello, my name is Richard

I’ve had a rough last few years after losing my job as a lorry driver and having to move out of my house as a result. I currently live in a caravan in the woods, so I’m keen to find out if the Homelessness Reduction Act is helping councils make a difference a year after it was introduced. You can read about that on page 26 and you can also hear about my story in more detail on page 46.

A HAND UP, NOT A HANDOUT
This magazine was bought by your vendor for £1.25 and sold to you for £2.50. They are proudly working, not begging. Buy it, take it, spread the word.

If you can’t get hold of a copy of the magazine on a regular basis, you can subscribe to receive The Big Issue every week: bigissue.com/subscribe

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The Star Wars and X-Men star says that love led him to the A-list

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EGGS-CELLENT TIPS
Don’t bin your eggs until you’ve read this—we’ve got some smashing news
the big list. What to do this week in England and beyond

01 Cut through the Brexit noise to hear the bigger issues
Alex Tiffin is no stranger to The Big Issue – last year we covered his collaboration with actor Hugh Grant to challenge people to give to foodbanks. Now, the Universal Credit blogger has taken his first tentative steps into the world of podcasting. The first episode of Also In The News takes an in-depth look into in-work poverty, Universal Credit and PIP payment changes. All issues that are being drowned out by Brexit. It’s rough around the edges but well worth tuning in now.
universalcreditsuffer.com/2019/03/29/watch-also-in-the-news-episode-1/

02 Don’t miss... The Specials
2-Tone legends and recent Big Issue cover stars The Specials hit the road in support of the excellent Encore, their first album of originals in 21 years and their first new material with vocalist Terry Hall since 1981’s iconic Ghost Town. O2 Academy, Bournemouth, April 15 (then touring); thespecials.com

03 Wait no longer for the finale of Game of Thrones
Last week in The Big Issue we heard from people whose lives have been changed by the world’s favourite sexy-violent fantasy drama. Now it’s time for Game of Thrones to change our lives, as the eighth and final season at last hits our screens and all we can think about all day every day is ice dragons, three-eyed ravens, brain pies, sweet, bloody revenge and how icky it is that Jon and Daenerys have got it together. Sky Atlantic, April 15; hbo.com/game-of-thrones

04 Help support the National Trust by hunting for Easter eggs
It’s the Easter partnership you just can’t beat – Cadbury has chocolate eggs in abundance, and the National Trust has acres of beautiful properties in which to lose them (some literally replete with bunnies). Join a hunt near you – from Morden Hall Park in London to Housesteads Fort in Northumberland and Sutton Hoo in Suffolk – and support vital conservation work at natural and historic places across England and Wales in the process. See website for details of hunts near you: nationaltrust.org.uk/features/join-the-cadbury-easter-egg-hunts

05 Back the campaign to stop letting agents discriminating against benefit claimants
‘No DSS’ – it’s a clause anyone who has ever scanned rental listings will be familiar with, but the discriminatory barrier to people on housing benefits letting a home is thankfully on its way out. Zoopla have already banned it from their adverts, and the government are pledging wider action. A petition for RightMove to join the clampdown is fast gaining signatures – add yours now. speakout.38degrees.org.uk/campaigns/rightmove-clamp-down-landlords
06 Find out how groundbreaking video games are changing the world
As the city where the ZX Spectrum was first assembled back in the early 1980s and later the birthplace of Grand Theft Auto, Dundee is the perfect home for Videogames: Design/Play/Disrupt – an exhibition plunging deep beneath the pixelated surface of the games industry. Forget myths about violent weapons of mass distraction – instead celebrate multifarious art forms rich with creative potential.
V&A, Dundee, April 20-September 8; vam.ac.uk/dundee

07 Get ready for T-shirt weather with Thraedable in The Big Issue Shop
Summer is coming and it’s time to stock up your wardrobe accordingly. Start by browsing The Big Issue Shop’s range by Thraedable – an emerging social enterprise seeking to give voice to the marginalised, who share 50 per cent of their gross profits with grassroots organisations that defend human rights. The Fatima design (pictured above) came out of art workshops with young Tunisians, while the Mask is inspired by an asylum seeker from Nigeria.
bigissueshop.com/vendor/thraedable

08 Watch the Homeless Games in Liverpool
Inspired by the example of the Homeless World Cup – which comes to Cardiff in the summer – this ‘Olympic-style’ sporting event for people who have experienced homelessness in the last two years is a great chance for some of the most vulnerable members of society to improve their physical and mental health. Hundreds of participants from all over the country will take part.
Liverpool Tennis Centre, Liverpool, April 17-18; thehomelessgames.org

09 Look on the bright side of life as a Monty Python classic returns to cinemas
From Jacob Rees-Mogg’s archaic obsession with Latin to quarrels between different Leave factions fiercer than the People’s Front of Judea versus the Judean People’s Front, and the rhetorical question that asks “What has the EU ever done for us?”, the Python’s blasphemous classic Life of Brian could scarcely be more apt to Brexit Britain. As the film turns 40, it’s back in cinemas to remind us all: no matter how grim things get, always look on the bright side.
In cinemas nationwide from April 18 (see review on page 33)

10 Take an epic walk with Michal Iwanowski’s exhibition Go Home, Polish
Responding very literally to some graffiti he saw scrawled in his adopted city of Cardiff, artist Michal Iwanowski set out on an incredible journey – walking 1,900km in 105 days from his flat all the way back to his native Poland, crossing eight countries as he went. The British-Polish dual citizen’s goal was to ask people about “home” along the way, and learn about the rising wave of nationalism sweeping across Europe. The resulting photo and film exhibition is a fascinating meditation on shared humanity, nationality and belonging.
Turner House Gallery, Penarth, until April 30; michaliwanowski.com

Find out how groundbreaking video games are changing the world
Michael Ball reveals his unhappy time at boarding school – and that he wanted a cuddle from his mum
The Cancer on Board badges making it easier for patients to ask for small gestures of help
We lift the lid on funeral poverty, which leaves many financially struggling as they grieve

This week on...
BIGISSUE.COM

No Man’s Sky, 2016. Hello Games

Photo: PictureLux / The Hollywood Archive / Alamy Stock Photo
THIS WEEK WE ASKED YOU...

A public health emergency was declared in New York over measles, while cases in Europe have tripled. Anti-vaccination campaigns by parents are being blamed. Should the state intervene?

Refusal of vaccines ought to be treated the same as refusal to use car seats for children.

Huggy Badger, Facebook

State should definitely intervene — not sure why you would leave ignorant people at risk: at least increase education about the good of vaccines and the science behind them.

Jamie Everett, Facebook

Speaking as someone with an auto-immune condition, some state intervention would be bloody lovely.

Jasmine Angel Woods, Facebook

It’s antisemitism in action. Many of the parents who choose not to vaccinate are orthodox Jews. Vaccines are not magical and offer little protection and severe potential damage.

Helen Wood, Facebook

Good job anti-vaxxers. Fucking wannabe hipster idiots. You know nothing. Vaccinate your kids, before you kill others.

Teresa Ann Victoria, Facebook

Rooting for Rutger

This is my first letter to The Big Issue, I’ve been a regular reader for many years, and I was taken with the Rutger Bregman interview [April 1-7].

I am claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance, have done for two-three years. I was initially started on Employment and Support Allowance — I gave up my job as a bank mental health nurse due to a long-term relationship breakdown. My father passed away in the same week. Life was barely manageable for me and my teenage daughter.

My treatment at the job centre was at times horrendous. I was in such a horrible place, suffering panic attacks, depression, feeling suicidal. I felt I had no control over my life. I struggled to get there and fake being OK. I’d see my work coach and get berated and sanctioned for being five minutes late. I lost a week’s money because I missed a bus! I was treated like a child, I lost my rag a couple of times, nearly got dragged out by a security guy.

I would agree for people’s dignity and sanity, we need an empowering, supporting system. People can think for themselves, given half a chance. A regular income instead of the embarrassing benefits system makes much more sense.

Sarah, Birmingham

A taxing business

Having read the interview with Rutger Bregman, I bought his book (I am nearly halfway through as I write). It resonated so well with what I think (and what most people, alas, seem to think is barmy).

We have been so brainwashed that there seems to be a collective belief that tax is a bad thing instead of realising that it is something that makes a country civilised. I would really like to hear a political party explain the benefits of tax and how the tax you pay affects the quality of publicly delivered services.

The resistance to the idea of a universal income is bound up with this idea of ‘hard-working’ tax-payers supporting the ‘feckless poor’, despite (as Bregman explains) this actually being shown to save governments money.

This relates to another article, in the same issue, on the normalisation of foodbanks — and other philanthropic organisations. We seem to have decided that charities should now provide services to deal with the damage that years of tax reduction and underfunded public services have done. In (high tax, lower income inequality) countries that have a strong public sector, the need for charities to step into the breach does not exist.

I hope (without much expectation that this will be realised) that, somewhere out of the mess that our political system is in, there might be a moderate, forward-thinking party that sees that continuously driving down taxes and public spending is just a race to the bottom — with the rich just getting richer and looking for somewhere to store their (untaxed) cash.

Peggy McGregor, email
Banking on us

I read, with interest, Joshua King’s piece on foodbanks [April 1-7]. Whilst I agree that foodbanks are masking a much deeper problem, I found some of the statements confusing and provocative; namely “We put a few tins or packets of pasta in collection baskets without seeing the deep inequalities driving hunger in the UK.” There are many people angry and frustrated by the deep inequalities that affect the UK and despite our efforts to reduce these problems, ie voting for change in the polls, the reality is that, as individuals, we feel the lack of ability to help.

Yes, foodbanks are not the answer, but whilst the government continues to act in such a childish and petulant manner over Brexit home issues are being left to fester and grow. As individuals we can only do small things to help change, and if that is helping with the immediate problem by putting food in the collection boxes, surely that is better than ignoring the problem and hoping it will go away. Of course the world should be fairer and better managed, but until real changes happen in government, we as individuals have to do what we can to help. As Gandhi said, “Be the change you want to see in the world.” We need to shout from the rooftops to advocate change, but we cannot ignore the suffering that we see in our daily lives. The article did not offer any advice on what we can do to help – perhaps guidance on this would have been useful.

Lucy Cotter, email

Keeping things in proportion

Regarding Brexit Britain [March 25-31], it is possible that Brexit could have been avoided if a quota system had been put in place as other EU countries have done. The fears that fuelled Brexit were the continual crisis in the NHS, the housing situation and the decline in services in general while trying to accommodate over 250,000 more people a year. Why wasn’t this thought through? Why does a nation of 67 million people need to poach so many that there are not enough trained personnel in this country, but it also needs skilled workers from countries that are more in need of them? Britain does need proportional immigration but it also needs to be proportionate.

Beyond the early closures, stories of teachers having to buy stationery are legion. There are reports of teachers also having to clean schools in order to make up a £29m shortfall in funding. Cuts to budgets are making early Friday closures increasingly the norm. Also in Wales, schools in Penarth warned similarly early Friday closures were likely: They’re a little more straight about the reason. There isn’t enough money. In a letter to parents, they pointed the finger of blame at the political leaders. The children’s education was being “compromised by the Welsh Government’s failure to fund schools properly”.

In Scotland, just a few weeks ago, Clackmannanshire Council said they were going to cut secondary school teaching and close primary schools in order to make up a £29m shortfall in funding. Jesse Phillips MP, a contender for future leader of the Labour Party, slammed her own local authority in Birmingham after they said they’d close schools early on Fridays. Her anger is understandable, her example far from isolated.

Surely that is better than ignoring the problem and hoping it will go away. Of course the world should be fairer and better managed, but until real changes happen in government, we as individuals have to do what we can to help. As Gandhi said, “Be the change you want to see in the world.” We need to shout from the rooftops to advocate change, but we cannot ignore the suffering that we see in our daily lives. The article did not offer any advice on what we can do to help – perhaps guidance on this would have been useful.

Lucy Cotter, email

EDITOR’S LETTER

Educate. Education. Education. Now.

I know you’re all drawing breath finally. The Brexit fog has cleared, for now. And you’d like to kick back, relax, get obsessed by Line of Duty, maybe eat some early Easter eggs.

Tough. I’m here to rain on your relaxing, sunny parade. As the fog clears, we can see the issues that have been obscured. Let’s start with schools.

Last week, schools in Wales announced plans to close early on a Friday. Neyland Community School in Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire said that from September, they’d shut at 12.25pm on Fridays rather than 3.20pm. This, they said, was because at that point in the week, “pupils often suffer from a greater lack of attention”.

And in a piece of classic doublespeak, they added they hoped that closing the school early, thereby preventing lessons, would “further raise standards and improve outcomes for learners across the school”. Cuts to budgets are making early Friday closures increasingly the norm. Also in Wales, schools in Penarth warned similarly early Friday closures were likely: They’re a little more straight about the reason. There isn’t enough money. In a letter to parents, they pointed the finger of blame at the political leaders. The children’s education was being “compromised by the Welsh Government’s failure to fund schools properly”.

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Beyond the early closures, stories of teachers having to buy stationery are legion. There are reports of teachers also having to clean their schools.

The Westminster government will claim that more is being spent than ever before on education. Not in REAL terms. In real terms, in England, it’s lower than 2015 levels. This is a similar picture across Britain. We can trace the cause of this to austerity cuts and council tax freezes — and how they have meant funding holes have to be met by across-the-board cuts.

That said, money clearly exists. Up to £4bn was spent preparing for a No-Deal Brexit. Chris Rayling himself blew millions on a ferry service with no ferries and then on compensation to Eurotunnel over commissioning ferry companies, including the one with no ferries.

Perhaps there is something to be said in reviewing and revising the system. That said, money clearly exists. Up to £4bn was spent preparing for a No-Deal Brexit. Chris Grayling himself blew millions on a ferry service with no ferries and then on compensation to Eurotunnel over commissioning ferry companies, including the one with no ferries.

Perhaps there is something to be said in reviewing and revising the school week. It’s more or less a Victorian system, tweaked for a very different age.

Perhaps there is something to be said in reviewing and revising the school week. It’s more or less a Victorian system, tweaked for a very different age.

At how the best education for all, rather than a postcode-selected one, can be delivered.

I suspect there won’t be a great appetite for that. And it’s a national shame. The early years provide a vital, formative, and transformative foundation for children. And we’re getting it wrong for them. Through cuts, through lack of focus, through a lack of concern for teachers.

I don’t know how far things have to fall before this becomes recognised as a national crisis. This feels very like one. And given the breather we have from Brexit, it is a good time to do something. It doesn’t mean we miss Line of Duty, just do this as well.

Paul McNamee is editor of The Big Issue
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‘ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THEATRICAL EVENTS
OF THE PAST 20 YEARS.’ ★★★★★ Observer
Big Issue cash gives ex-addicts a second chance

£400k investment to support marginalised people into work

The Big Issue’s social investment arm Big Issue Invest (BII) has committed £400,000 to help people recovering from drug and alcohol abuse enter employment.

WDP – a charity helping people affected by substance misuse – will use the investment to help more than 1,700 people across eight London boroughs, offering them intensive support alongside an up-front job search leading to paid employment. They will also receive in-work support from an employment specialist.

Using the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model, WDP will support people who would otherwise be unable to enter the jobs market in Brent, Barnet, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow, Ealing, Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea.

The social impact bond is an outcome-based investment from BII’s Outcomes Investment Fund.

“This will be the largest IPS social impact bond service to date backed by a social investor,” said Lars Hagelmann, investment director at BII. Yasmin Batilawa, WDP chair, added: “The new service – IPS Into Work – will guarantee much-needed resource to support people into paid employment and also enable them to live healthier and more productive lives.”

bigissueinvest.com
Are asthma inhalers as bad for the planet as a 180-mile car journey?

**FACTS. CHECKED**

As unlikely as it may seem, it is true.

The claim centres on the use of metered-dose inhalers which use hydrofluorocarbons to propel the medicine into a user’s respiratory system. That amounts to a carbon footprint of 500g CO2eq per dose compared to just 20g for the alternative dry powder inhalers.

Five doses amount to the equivalent of a nine-mile journey in an average car, and with 100 doses per metered dose inhaler that adds up to 180 miles.

Trouble is, NICE reports that there were more than 26 million prescriptions for metered dose inhalers in England in 2016/17, with this model accounting for 70 per cent of UK inhaler sales.

The impact they are having has been on the radar of the NHS for some time before the latest warning.

A British Medical Journal report in 2013 – entitled “Propellants in metered dose inhalers are powerful greenhouse gases” – highlighted the incredible impact these life-saving devices have on the environment.

Across the NHS as a whole, its annual climate change potential at the time was 20 million tonnes of carbon dioxide – or three per cent of the UK’s total emissions – and the same as the whole of Estonia. This was split down to 35 per cent from heating, lighting and transport and 65 per cent from procurement and the delivery of healthcare, including drugs, with respiratory inhalers some of the biggest offenders in the latter group.

The NHS has pledged to tackle its environmental output with a Long Term Plan and asthma inhalers receive a specific mention as an area to cut down on.

However, there has been some backlash from patients who hit out at charity Asthma UK on social media after NICE’s warning, insisting that the onus should be on the manufacturers that the NHS opts to work with, not patients to assess their carbon footprint. Others stressed that having the right inhaler for their condition came as a priority over saving the planet.

And there is a certain irony that the stories were published just as London mayor Sadiq Khan unveiled a new ultra-low emissions zone while another report from The Lancet uncovered that vehicle pollution led to four million child asthma cases worldwide each year.

Asthma patients can’t win – pollution either contributes to the condition or is exacerbated by treating their symptoms.

**HOW IT WAS TOLD**

Inhalers save lives for the millions of Brits who use them every day to keep asthma at bay – but news stories last week suggested that they may not be doing the planet any favours.

The health watchdog the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) launched a new patient decision aid tool to allow users to compare the carbon footprint between inhalers to make a decision on which is the most environmentally friendly model.

That triggered a rush of stories warning patients that they can make the switch to cut down on the NHS’s sizable carbon footprint as well as recycling old inhalers responsibly.

Daily Mail Online, The Independent and The Daily Telegraph’s stories all centred around the staggering fact that inhalers emit as much carbon as a 180-mile car journey.

The Scottish Sun opted for a focus on the new option to switch which inhaler you are being offered with: “PUFFER PLEA: Millions of asthmatics are being told to switch to eco-friendly inhalers”. Similarly, the BBC went for “Use a ‘greener’ inhaler if you can, patients told”.

But can it be true that a tiny inhaler can have the same impact as a gas-guzzling motor travelling virtually the same distance as a trip from Manchester to London?
That thing you do?

Do it to beat heartbreak forever

Whatever your thing is – baking, swimming or even unicycling – it can help turn our ground-breaking science into life saving treatments.

Get your free fundraising pack at bhf.org.uk/doyourthing
HELP US SHARE THE BREAD OF LIFE THIS EASTER

Your gift of £5 will help families in need to share a meal and receive a message of God’s love and care this Easter.

Visit www.mwbuk.org to learn how you can help transform lives this Easter.
I got a very sincere letter from people who were worried that if you were homeless then you had nowhere to wash. They suggested showers and baths be reinstalled, the public baths of old, in our cities. At least then the homeless could wash.

Other people I get letters from suggest a cleverer, more deeply spread use of the soup line. And other things, like getting all of the food stuff from supermarkets, out of date stuff, and getting it to people in need.

I never ever get a letter from anyone saying, “How can we end this need? How can we stop the bestial way in which countless stopgaps don’t do more than cover the day?”

I think that is because we are taught how to think not deeply, but sketchily, as if life was some large supermarket, made up of many aisles. And we need to make sure all of our requirements are met in this world of shelves of needs.

Hence when people look at poverty and need, at the destruction of people’s lives on and in the streets, they think, “What can we add to make them clean and less hungry?” as if life was a long supermarket shelf and all we need to do to make the world honest and true, and equal, is to ensure that we all of us get the shelf of goods and services we need or desire.

Unfortunately our long progress from leaving Africa over 70,000 years ago, and ending up in Croydon, Romford, Paisley, Carmarthen, etc, has not involved us in learning how to think in bigger than ‘relief’ terms when it comes to poverty. We cannot seem to get over this hurdle, which would allow us to imagine what is necessary to dismantle the problem, rather than to make those with the problem more comfortable.

Don’t think you are alone in all of this. Most of the big educated and powerful players are involved in this fascination with looking at life as a series of ‘effects’ and give no attention to ‘causes’. So when I went into the House of Lords to dismantle poverty by preventing it they looked at me and smiled and told me of the latest piece of band-aid thinking they wanted to apply to the problem.

But still the letters come in. Letters from Harvard graduates and graduates of Oxbridge asking me what they need to do. And I am tempted to send them a postcard with the word “Think!”.

Of course I am not so silly or rude as to do that. But I do when the chance presents itself tell people that we as a species need to move on from dealing with effects, to tackling the ‘cause’.

Where did this shit come from? How can it be prevented? How can we stop tomorrow being a rerun of today?

There is a very great point made by certain people today to emphasise that when it came to Brexit our younger generation tended either to be too young to vote, or voted to stay; and will be paying for the mistakes of those who are old and voted to leave. It seems to point out that if you voted to stay you were usually younger than those who voted to leave.

I often hear that this is a kind of injustice. It’s a nice idea, a generation screws up the future for another generation.

I know what they mean. I did not vote for the Second World War, but my generation paid for the mistakes made by the previous generation. And they paid all the way through to when I got to 50 years of age for their decisions. It’s like that. We inherit the mistakes or territory of former generations.

Future generations will really have to work full time on making sure that they don’t leave grief for later generations to pick up. Like climate change. Like wars and oppression. Like exploitation.

And also perhaps we need future generations to abhor all of the emphasis on dealing with the ‘effects’, with little on the ‘cause’. That would be a major leap in our thinking.

But there is little evidence that human beings will suddenly change their philosophical spots and stop just dealing with life as if it were a series of today, followed by another today, followed by even more todays.

Prevention should be pushed up the political top 10 and made to become the big one.

Of course, who wants to suffer shortages and poverty today on the basis that we should be supporting future generations? It’s easier in many ways to think life is simply just a series of stopgap things that need to be done to get you through to the end of your life.

But stopgaps lead only to people actually having no future. The need to have heat and power for industry in the late 18th century, and then the Industrial Revolution – pressing needs for development – has finally led us to even more shameless environmental destruction.

It all fits together. Short term, people demanding more showers for the streets, and sandwiches for the streets, fits in very well with putting off the big thinking: prevention, for another time and another generation.

Too many bright solutions for patching things up. Not enough for preventing things. Join the thinking revolution and demand prevention!

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I met the writer Jozef Czapski last month, partly because he taught me about the Stalinist prison camp in Poland. The warnings I heard from him, and from historians who have worked on this topic, were that we must not become complacent about the future. There is a great deal of fear in the world today. It’s a lot of our fault.

There is a great deal of fear in the world today. It’s a lot of our fault.

John Bird is the founder and Editor in Chief of The Big Issue.
Circle Collective is about more than hoodies, trainers and bags. The skate and streetwear stores, based in London’s Dalston and Lewisham, were created by Turly Humphreys to help young people break down the barriers keeping them from work. From CV coaching to confidence-building, the support received by young people in her Big Issue Invest-backed stores goes well beyond the shop floor – and helps an impressive 76 per cent of them into successful working lives.

Originally from Bedford, Humphreys forged a career in commercial business and franchising. But there was something missing. “You just get disillusioned,” the 59-year-old explains. “I wanted to make a difference, and I’ve always had a passion for seeing young people reach their potential, regardless of their circumstances.”

She was also tired of mistruths she heard peddled about young people. “They say young people just don’t want to work. Maybe that they’re lazy. It’s nothing like that.” Last year it was estimated that across the UK there were nearly 800,000 16 to 24-year-olds not in education, employment or training (more than 11 per cent of all people in this age group).

“Some have mental health problems or huge confidence issues,” Humphreys continues. “Loads just don’t have the money to even get to a job interview. And it’s more difficult than ever to get a job without work experience nowadays – which you can’t get without a job. They’re receiving no support from the government.”

In 2010, Humphreys found herself at the helm of a local charity shop and was struck by an idea. She went to her nearest job centre and asked for nine young people to come on board as staff. The project grew into Circle Collective.

“It wasn’t a quick growth,” Humphreys says. “I don’t believe it should be if you want to create something stable and develop a really strong business.” But now, one store has become two; an initial nine young people have become 400 overall; and the team reckons it generates £4.66 of social value from every £1 it spends, with 76 per cent of its graduates going on to steady jobs.

“Some people might be with us for a week, some might be around for six months,” the founder explains. “Everything we do is tailored to them.”

The stores sell all the most popular skate and streetwear brands like Nike, Vans and Dickie, with bold window displays to get people through the door to shop and support the social enterprise’s mission.

Whether referred through services like mental health charity Mind or accepted after applying themselves, 16 to 24-year-olds (Lewisham) and 18 to 30-year-olds (Dalston) involved with Circle Collective do two four-hour shifts a week. Nearly half of the people who go to the social enterprise have no work experience at all before heading out to the shop floor.

Most are quick to treat it as seriously as they would a job. Humphreys points out. They learn in-work-skills like using a till, visual merchandising, and customer service (“Lots of them come to us without the confidence to speak to anyone outside their peer group,” says Humphreys). But behind the scenes, the Get Employed programme offers one-to-one mentoring, interview practice, employability and confidence-building workshops, personal finance lessons and employee rights classes plus regular opportunities to meet employers. The coaching prepares them for entry-level jobs across all sectors, not just retail.

The founder and CEO brought her business skills to the project, and as a result Circle Collective formed unlikely partnerships with companies like property developer and Lewisham shopping centre owner Landsec, which has supported the programme “amazingly, much more passionately than you can usually expect from a big corporation,” Humphreys says. It is one of several companies that offer Circle Collective candidates entry-level jobs. The company has also contributed funding for training courses, talks by their staff on job opportunities and free retail space to the social enterprise.

Consumer credit company Experian provides credit rating training days, which Humphreys raves about: “They make a dry subject so engaging,” she says. “They put it in real terms. These young people learn that if they mess about with their phone contract now, they might not be able to buy a car further down the line. I think a lot of us would benefit from those lessons as we enter the world of work.”

The Circle Collective team is working on holding more events and exhibitions in their stores, looking to create a community space as well as supporting young independent artists. Humphreys, who is Entrepreneur in Residence for London College of Fashion, is leading the development of Circle Collective’s own-brand range, which will offer the opportunity for young creatives to see their work on clothes and will be produced by women at Downview Prison.

Humphreys explains: “The young people and the women – their problems are rooted in similar issues. Now the young people care about the women currently in prison, the women care about the young people succeeding, it’s a really beneficial project.” The clothing line is set to launch in September.

“All of this... It is extremely rewarding. Challenging too, of course,” says Humphreys. “But hearing from a young person that they have the confidence to go out and speak to anyone now – something as small as that is all you need to hear.”

Interview: Hannah Westwater @hannahjtw

NAME: Turly Humphreys
PROJECT: Circle Collective
IN BRIEF: After a career in commercial business, Humphreys was shocked to see the difficulty young people had getting work. “You need experience to get a job, but without job you can’t get experience,” she says. Using her business skills, she launched a social enterprise which welcomes young people not in education or in work and coaches them into successful employment – all through the fashion-forward lens of skate and streetwear.

FIND OUT MORE
circlecollective.org
ETHICAL VITAMINS WITH AN ORGANIC HEART

Visit your local health store to discover the right programme of food, lifestyle and supplements for your individual needs.

viridian
www.findahealthstore.com
While the UK languishes in a stultifying fug of Brexit-induced democracy-fatigue, in India election fever is hotting up. Incredibly the voting process takes six weeks. With more than 900 million eligible voters—almost three times the entire population of the USA—India has the world’s largest electorate, more than the combined size of the next five biggest nations.

This photograph shows supporters at a rally in Wardha for prime minister Narendra Modi, who swept to victory five years ago. He is pushing policies such as improving health and education for girls, while his main opponents, the Congress Party, promise to lift the country’s poorest out of poverty and introduce a minimum guaranteed income.

With 545 seats in the Lower House of Parliament, there is much to play for. While professional fixers pack out rallies with rent-a-crowd supporters, the election process is monitored by security personnel who travel around the one million polling stations, which are manned by 10 million election officials.

It’s not just Indians who have mandates on their minds; Israelis have just voted in Benjamin Netanyahu for a record fifth term, and 192 million Indonesians will be eligible to cast their ballots this week.
At 16 I was a very slim, pale fellow with Buddy Holly glasses and very thick pile of dark hair, and I was embarking on an amazing awakening. I’d been at boarding school, 2,000 miles from home, since I was 11 and been mildly depressed, though I didn’t have the analytical tools to recognise it, to even say it to myself. But around the age of 16 I realised that although it was school, I was in the most extraordinarily lovely place, in a beautiful stretch of Suffolk on the River Orwell. I was waking up to literature, reading a lot of poetry and music. I was listening to Bach for the first time. And a lot of jazz and the electric blues. I became wildly excited about life, roaring on all fronts.

The great lack in my life of course, at my all-boys school, was the opposite sex. So a lot of longing was channelled into this love of music and books. Huge sublimation was obviously going on. It was slightly unnatural. At 16 a very charismatic English teacher told me I was clever and I suddenly felt clever for the first time in my life. He introduced me to Graham Greene, Iris Murdoch, Brian Aldiss, William Golding. I became very earnest and serious. And began to get the idea that the study of English literature was like a priesthood and I was going to dedicate myself to it and probably get a job teaching English one day.

I used to look forward to going home for the holidays but within a week I’d be restless and bored because there were no kids around. My father, a military man, was stationed in Germany, so since I was about 12 I would make the journey from Suffolk to Germany – boat, then train. I was very fond of my parents, they were very kindly. But the things that were fascinating to me were quite alien to them. They both left school at 14, and had a lovely commitment to my education. But the things that education gave me, that love of literature and the arts, didn’t mean much to them. Which gave me a bit of arrogance which I condemn myself utterly for now. I went through a five-year stretch of thinking anyone who hadn’t read The Wasteland wasn’t worth talking to. How unbearable of me.

Much later on I saw the full humanity of my parents. And I saw that they were shaped by two great forces I’d been very lucky to avoid; the Great Depression and the Second World War. I realised a lot of my generation’s parents had stared into the abyss. They’d seen death on a scale that was unimaginable to our generation. And so when it all ended, and the country began to get a little more prosperous, they clung to ordinariness, stability and regularity. Things that seemed like the most boring thing in the world to me, like polishing a car, I later saw how that was a soothing thing for a man who had been through slaughter. So I’d love to send that message back to my younger self. You are in a life with no danger and you must appreciate that people who have been in real danger find comfort in routine. What did we do? Grow our hair and walk around with no shoes on, smoking a bit of dope, thinking we were on the cutting edge of experience. Nonsense.

I think my younger self would have been amazed that in 1972, just after my university days, I’d see the cover of a literary magazine – the New American Review – and it would have four names, all in the same size – Philip Roth, Günter Grass, Susan Sontag, Ian McEwan. I almost fainted. To see my name among these legendary writers, who I had such admiration for.

Around 1973, 1974 Martin [Amis] introduced me to Christopher [Hitchens] and they ran through some of their routines together, which were very obscene and... my ribs were aching. Whenever I came into a room Chris would go into third person mode and say, “Here comes the slim ironic figure of Ian McEwan.” During that time I met all the young men, or mainly men, who became lifelong friends – James Fenton, Craig Raine, Clive James, Julian Barnes. And yes, we had a lot of fun running around town together, having our first books and articles published.
I saw later how polishing a car was soothing for a man who had been through slaughter.

I didn’t rack up scores of girlfriends the way Martin [Amis] was famous for. I quite liked focusing deeply on one relationship. And I loved fatherhood from the start, absolutely adored it. I got married in 1982 and we moved to Oxford and had two sons. And I had two stepdaughters as well. So we had this big household in Oxford and it was a lovely time actually. I loved kids from babies onwards. I see my children a lot. They have been a source of immense pleasure in my life.

If I could go back and have a final conversation with anyone I think I’d choose my first love. Her name was Polly Bide and we fell in love at university. And we stayed friends for the rest of our lives. Then around 2001 she began to get ill and she died of cancer in 2003. And I did see her, but in all the busyness and the narrative of her illness — its moments of depressive and moments of hope — we never sat down and had the kind of deep conversation in which we acknowledged she was dying. She was a lovely, lovely person and I still miss her.

Death is always there, like a distant mountain range you’re always approaching. I think you just have to try to live your life to the full. You’ve had the gift of this consciousness for 70 or 80 years, you hope you’ve made the most of it. I feel a sadness about it really. I feel that life is good. Then you have these moments when you think, this all has to end. Not even in nothing, but beyond nothing. The fact that everyone else is going to end too doesn’t make it any better. There’s a line in Larkin’s poem Aubade, “Not to be here, not to be anywhere.” People who believe in an afterlife will never know they were wrong so it must be a great comfort to them. But not to me.

If I could re-live one day it would be when I was with a couple of friends and we went for a huge hike in the Big Sur in California. I must have been about 27. We had this wonderful afternoon with the ocean crashing around us, and unbelievable vegetation. There came a point when we were heading back to our tents and we felt so happy, so good in our bodies, that we decided to run the last five or six miles along the path of the cliff. It was just that wonderful easy running and as we went through that landscape I just thought, I’m in heaven. This is beautiful. Just the delight in the physical act of running, the extraordinary landscape around me, good friends, the thought of the evening ahead of me just as the sun was setting. I thought, I’ve got a cove in paradise. I knew it at the time and that moment has remained with me ever since.
I WAS LIVING ON THE STREETS AT 15

THE BIG ISSUE SAVED ME

Photographed for The Big Issue by Louise Haywood-Schiefer at The Florist Shack, London on April 5 2019
"I was 16 when I first started selling The Big Issue. Well, I was 15, but I lied about my age!" Sabrina Cohen-Hatton is a walking, talking, firefighting reminder to ditch our preconceptions.

At 36, she is one of the most senior female firefighters in the UK, taking charge of the service’s response to terror attacks in Finsbury Park and Westminster in London in 2017. Cohen-Hatton is a reminder that brains and empathy rather than brawn are top of the list of requirements to be successful in her profession. She is also a prize-winning academic and author of a new book on life-and-death decision-making.

Her list of achievements is especially remarkable because aged 15 she was homeless. Her happy life just outside Cardiff had been shattered by her father’s death six years earlier and, like so many young people, she slipped through support services’ net. Sleeping rough while taking her GCSEs already her resourcefulness and determination were in evidence.

“I would sell The Big Issue every day after school,” she says, when we meet up in West London. “I was in the town centre, so there was no secret to the fact I was sleeping rough. One teacher even saw me selling the magazine, but he crossed the road to avoid me.”

She lets out a hollow laugh at the memory and quietly calls him a jerk. For years, Cohen-Hatton suppressed memories like this. She finds it hard to talk about her past but is doing so now, she says, “to tell people who are in the same place I was that it doesn’t have to define you. Your circumstance doesn’t determine where you end up, just where you start from. It doesn’t define what you can do.”

Revisiting her past is painful. But slowly her story tumbles out – a tale of poverty and the lack of a safety net, of community and survival.

“Life was brilliant until my dad got ill. He was given six months to live, but ended up living for six years. None of my family are very good with authority,” she says.

“He was an awesome man. Him and my mum absolutely idolised each other. To the point where she still sleeps on the sofa where he died. She has never got over his death. After he died she suffered very badly with her mental health.

“Things were really difficult. We were completely poverty-stricken. Our school dinner was the only real sustenance we ever got. Home was just hideous. We didn’t have any heating, we didn’t have any food. At
school I was too embarrassed to do PE – I didn't want to get changed because my feet were dirty. I didn't have close friends because we were the dirty, scruffy kids that no one wanted to hang out with.”

After leaving her unhappy home, Cohen-Hatton sofa-surfed until she had outstayed her welcome.

“It wasn’t long before I was sleeping rough. On and off, for two years I was either sleeping rough or vulnerably housed. And it was really shit, actually. You always think it will never happen to you.

“We used to sleep in the doorway of a disused church until it was boarded up. I would sleep in subways until I woke up to a guy pissing on my sleeping bag, and around the back of the post office there was an air-conditioning outlet.”

Throughout this time, Cohen-Hatton attempted to project an air of normality, stashing her books in The Big Issue office or in the shadows of a derelict building she used to sleep in. She found support through The Big Issue and a group of homeless people who looked after her on the street.

“It was like a community in a way. Ironically, I hadn’t experienced previously,” she says. “Because when life is that difficult, you feel very isolated, even within a family. One guy was so amazing – he had lived his whole life in and out of care and young offenders’ prisons. From day one he treated me like his little sister. I owe him hugely. It is the ones with the least who share the most. I was more vulnerable than ever before, but I felt like I had people around me who gave a shit.”

Cohen-Hatton mentions that The Children’s Act of 2004, which states that public bodies have a duty to share information if they think a child is vulnerable, would have helped her.

“But this was in 1999. I was looking for help from the authorities and there was none,” she says.

“When I went to meet my old social worker, I was met with an empty office. If that was to happen to me now, a bit older and wiser, I would persevere. But at the time you just think ‘This is another rejection.’

‘I went to the council to get on the housing list, but people who were about to become homeless were prioritised over people who were already homeless. I don’t resent that because becoming homeless is horrible. I wouldn’t wish it on anybody.

“There were times I was really hungry. I would eat out of bins. I was too young to claim any benefits – they offered me £15 a fortnight ‘bridging allowance’. Don’t spend it all at once.

“So that was the great thing about The Big Issue. It gave me an opportunity to earn. It gave me some dignity back at a time when I felt like I didn’t have any. When you live that life, you feel invisible. You feel like a ghost in society. If someone in the street falls over, people rush over to help, but there you are on the street corner with no food in your belly, nowhere to live, no clean clothes and people walk past you like you are not there.”

There were difficult situations to navigate. Cohen-Hatton describes the state of being vulnerable and constantly on the lookout for danger while homeless as “like living in an episode of Danger Mouse”.

She says: “When you are so used to feeling vulnerable, you see everything as a threat. I used to look for escape routes all the time and create booby traps so I could get away. There were a few times I was bloody glad that I did as well.

“I was very fortunate. I never got into drugs,” she continues. “But one of the things that was really apparent is that you can’t live that life and not be touched by them. By the time I was 17, I had been to seven funerals of people I was homeless with who had overdosed or had a bad batch.

“It happens around you. One minute they are there, the next that is them gone forever. All of these people are human beings, someone’s son or daughter. Some were mums or dads. And that is it, life is snuffed out. You don’t get another shot, that is game over. And that was really, really hard.”

After completing her exams, and selling The Big Issue at several pitches in Newport, Cardiff and occasionally Chepstow, Cohen-Hatton moved on.

“Seeing people around me dropping like flies, I thought I have to get out. I decided to go hammer and tongs to get out of that life. So I went to Monmouth.

“I used to get up at 6am and spend an hour on the bus, then sell The Big Issue from 7am to 7pm. Then I would have a little bit each day to put aside.

“I was able to save up three months’ rent in advance, which was £200 a month, and put down a deposit on a very cheap rented flat outside Newport. It wasn’t much
but it was mine. It was Big Issue money that got me my flat. And I felt very proud that I’d earned it.

“My dog, Menace, came with me to my flat and still slept on my feet – like he did when we were in a sleeping bag.”

From that stable base, things improved for Cohen-Hatton. She chose her new location for its cheap price, but also its vicinity to a part-time fire station.

“I really wanted to join the fire service. Even when I was still homeless, this was what I was aspiring to,” she says. “I applied to 30 different fire services across the country. I would have gone anywhere, but I got the job in south Wales. And it was all up from there.

“I love that they took me on the strength of who I was. They took someone who on paper didn’t look like a great prospect, a girl who had a great big chunk of NFA [No Fixed Abode] and whose greatest achievement to date was making Big Issue Vendor of the Week – three times, no less! The fire service is a second chance for loads of people.

“But the thing that really attracted me is that it gives you the opportunity to make someone’s life better. Whether proactively making sure they don’t have a fire, or being one of the people trusted to know what to do on someone’s very worst day.

“I knew what rock bottom felt like. I knew what the worst possible day felt like. And I certainly knew what vulnerability felt like. I saw it as an opportunity to rescue other people in a way that no one rescued me. That is something that I carry with me every single day when I go to work.”

Joining the fire service, Cohen-Hatton progressed through the ranks. By 25, she was a station commander. “For most firefighters, it gets under your skin. It is a vocation, it becomes part of your identity.”

She was inspired to study psychology by an incident in which she feared her then-fiancé – now husband – Mike was injured in a call-out that left one of his colleagues severely burned.

“There was only one fire engine at that incident and I knew he was on it. So there was a one-in-four chance it was him. It was just hideous,” she recalls.

“When I saw he was OK, I had this sense of relief but a massive sense of guilt – because the whole journey I crossed my fingers hoping it wasn’t him. I felt I had wished it on someone else. And that person was our friend, not just a colleague.”

Cohen-Hatton decided to channel her guilt for the greater good by looking into ways to reduce instances of firefighter injury.

“What I discovered, to my shock, is that 80 per cent of all industrial accidents are as a result of human error. Not a failure of a piece of equipment or flawed procedure, but a human mistake. Someone effectively making the wrong choice in the wrong place at the wrong time – with the outcome that real people get hurt.

“I started to try to unpick the mechanisms that go through your brain when you are exposed to these circumstances. That is what drove me right through my PhD and we have been doing research for nearly a decade now.”

She completed her part-time PhD in just three years, kicking off her research straight after giving birth to her daughter Gabriella, who is now nine. That would be quick for a full-time student, let alone a part-timer with a new baby. How did she manage?

“Someone told me they didn’t think I could do it – that was all the fire I needed!”

Her research has since won international awards, including two from the American Psychological Association, and led to changes in policy and decision-making protocol across the fire service and other emergency services.
WHAT DO YOU SEE?
WHO WILL SHE BECOME?
CAN SHE REWRITE HER STORY?

SHE COULD...
BUT ONLY WITH YOUR HELP

Thousands of people are cut off from the outside world – from education, opportunity, medical care, and hope – simply because of where they were born.

What if there was a way to change that?

CHANGE THE ENDING

find out how at maf-uk.org/changetheending
"I wanted to get people to think about the human side of firefighting, not just the idea that you dial 999 and a superhero then appears," she says. "A firefighter's strength is how they work as a team — and for that you need a diverse group to deal with every kind of situation. You wouldn't want a toolbox full of the same-sized spanner, so you don't want a crew that is all massive and muscular. When I was on the trucks, I would often be the one that crawled into the back of a mangled wreckage to give lifesaving first aid because I was the littlest one."

She also talks about the effects of coming into close contact with horrific situations on a regular basis.

"I would be lying if I said I didn't sometimes get this overwhelming fear of loss. Because we see it happen every day, you really know your own mortality. The amount of time I have spent just watching my daughter sleep, thinking about how lucky I am to have her."

Reflecting on her decision to tell her own life story — which has already been optioned for TV by Kudos, the makers of Broadchurch and Life on Mars — alongside the lessons any one of us can learn from her pioneering research, Cohen-Hatton admits to more survivor’s guilt.

"It was hard to relive all those vulnerabilities," she says. "At times I was typing away on my laptop and tears were falling down my face. You are reliving emotions, but there is also that guilt factor — that I got out of it and some of the other people haven't."

"I am sat in my warm comfortable home that I now own, typing away on my laptop that I can afford, with food in my fridge and a family around me that I love and who love me. And I still have this massive feeling of guilt for the people that died on the street when I was with them. For the people that never escaped. And for the people still in that day-to-day survival battle as opposed to really living."

Sabrina Cohen-Hatton is a Big Issue Ambassador.

Her book The Heat Of The Moment: Life and Death Decision-Making from a Firefighter is out now (Doubleday, £16.99) @adey70

LIKE SABRINA, THIS LONDON VENDOR IS MAKING AN IMPACT THANKS TO THE BIG ISSUE

Phil Chapman had an idea for getting homeless people into work and is bending the ear of top politicians passing his Westminster pitch

While process in parliament has been glacial lately, Big Issue vendor Phil is bucking the trend.

The 60-year-old mixes with political top brass on his pitch at Pret A Manger on Great Peter Street in Westminster, near the Home Office's HQ.

Selling the magazine has given the self-described 'ideas man' a chance to run his latest brainwave past the likes of Andrea Leadsom and Esther McVey, and he recently secured an audience with homelessness minister Heather Wheeler.

Phil is proposing a new way to bring jobs to homeless hostels to help residents to move into private rentals and free up space for more rough sleepers. He envisages councils offering jobs — such as street cleaning, litter picking or leaf sweeping — to homeless people. It would act like an apprenticeship with paid work for 100 days, resulting in a permanent position if the employee is a success. The idea is that this is supported by sponsors to provide funding while they — or support staff like key workers — could also act as trustees, saving a proportion of their wages to cover a deposit for accommodation at the end of the trial period.

Complying with minimum wage and employment laws, Phil hopes successful workers will be able to save £2,000, enough to move into a shared rental property. "It will help people in long-term unemployment take a more realistic route back into work as it would be a gentle step which would give them more self-confidence for a better future for themselves," he explains.

The proposal first gained traction on January 31 when Lord George Young of Cookham held aloft The Big Issue magazine he had bought from Phil earlier that day and said: "When I bought my copy of The Big Issue today from Phil in Great Peter Street I remembered the noble [Big Issue founder] Lord Bird. Phil suggested that those in the Victoria area who are recruiting staff could do well to call into the hostel where Phil stays where they would find some motivated, hardworking employees like him who deserve a break."

He has seen a different side to politicians. "I've got Leadsom on my side, I know Andrea quite well. Esther McVey is also talking to me," says Phil. "The pitch I'm on is quite powerful. I talk to people and say, 'What do you do?' and policy-makers talk to me. It is my little world, but I'll talk to them like anybody else. That pitch is worth £100,000 to me, if you know what I mean, with all the valuable contacts, it's really good."

The initiative is being considered by Wheeler's office, while Phil is keen on securing funding through Westminster Council's 'Chat, App, Tap' rough sleeping campaign. Phil, who has sold The Big Issue magazine for three years, has seen a profound impact. "It is such an important thing, it's the best thing I've done in my life, the most important thing I've done, and the most successful I've been in my life."
The Homelessness Reduction Act: one year on

Think tank New Local Government Network found that two thirds of councils believe that those funds fall short – and that figure rises to 86 per cent for London boroughs.

The Local Government Association’s (LGA) own HRA survey found more people were housed in temporary and emergency accommodation and staying there for longer in six out of 10 of the councils they quizzed. The number of people presenting to authorities as homeless has also increased since the act came in for eight out of 10 councils.

“A lack of affordable housing has left many struggling to cope with rising numbers of people coming to them for help and having to place more families and households into temporary and emergency accommodation as a result,” says LGA housing spokesman Martin Tett.

“This is bad for families and communities, expensive for councils and not the aim of the act.”

The construction of social rent homes has plummeted by 80 per cent in the last decade and that’s why homelessness charity Shelter is calling for 3.1 million more social homes to be built over the next two decades. That’s 155,000 per year, dwarfing the 6,463 built in 2017/18.

Until those homes are in place to meet the demand for social housing, local authorities are still forced to stick people in temporary accommodation. And it’s not cheap – 82,310 households were living in B&Bs, hostels and so forth last year – representing a 71 per cent increase since 2010 – with the eye-watering price tag of £997bn.

In many ways, the act hasn’t changed this problem – it’s not going to build homes and where can you direct someone threatened with homelessness without them?

And it is not going to address the other issues that lead to homelessness – whether that is the loss of a private tenancy, kids leaving care, members of the armed forces returning to public life or hospital patients and prisoners being released without a stable footing.

Neither will it iron out problems with Universal Credit or make frozen Local Housing Allowance benefits enough to pay rent.

But according to Blackman, the focus on prevention is key to allowing councils to plan, reducing the need to push the panic button to send people into emergency and temporary accommodation as well as sparking a cultural shift.

“One of the key lessons that has to be learned by local authorities is that we’re changing the whole culture and the way people behave towards homeless people,” he says.

“Every housing authority, if they’re honest, adopted the approach of, ‘It’s nothing to do with us, go and sleep on a park bench’ even if they wouldn’t admit it upfront.

“What we wanted to change it to was: ‘I’m terribly sorry to hear your problem, please sit down, how can we help?’ Getting that cultural change is the most difficult part.”

As it stands, the act has funding for another three years to prove it can bring in that cultural change as well as more tangible results.

There have been success stories with trailblazers, most notably Southwark in South London, which adopted the new regulations before they became law.

“Without the resources and homes councils need to unlock the act’s huge potential, there will be more glass ceilings than roofs overhead.”

@Lazergun_Nun

HRA in numbers

To assess the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act, The Big Issue sent Freedom of Information requests to all 354 councils in England – and 254 responded. Here’s what we found:

7,734 Approaches in Bradford over homelessness or the threat of homelessness – the highest figure we came across.

£577,130 was the largest new burdens grant to cover additional duties – in Newham, east London

2,871 households prevented from being homeless in Leeds – top among our responses.

862 households relieved from being homeless – again top of our list and also in Leeds

See bigissue.com for a more extensive breakdown of the experimental statistics
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DO/ WILD BAKING/ Food, fire and good times. Tom Herbert
Working primarily in painting, drawing and collage, Paul is fascinated by the process behind his art, which he describes as "a partnership between the conscious and the unconscious mind". He submits this piece with the support of Creative Future, a Brighton-based charity supporting under-represented artists. Paul has had experience of homelessness and suffers with ongoing mental health difficulties.

You can see more of Paul’s work in person at Brighton Artist Open Houses with Creative Future throughout May: creativefuture.org.uk

Street Art is created by people who are marginalised. Contact street.lights@bigissue.com to see your art here. To see more and buy prints: bigissueshop.com At least half the profit goes to the artist.
Taking heart

When Susan Lewis was confronted with the reality of life waiting for a heart transplant, she decided her next novel would tackle the issue head on.

The question writers are asked most often is ‘Where do your ideas come from?’ In the case of my latest book One Minute Later, it was my stepson’s friend, Jim Lynam, aged 22, who provided the most remarkable and compelling inspiration.

Jim lives in the Midlands, is mad about football, loves music and has the same sort of big plans for his future as any other young man his age. What’s different about Jim is that he will be unable to achieve his dreams unless he finds a new heart.

The heart Jim has can only function with the support of an LVAD – left ventricular assist device. This means he is permanently connected to a pump and its batteries, which he carries around with him, but of course it imposes many restrictions (we featured Jim’s story in our February 18-24 issue, you can also find it on bigissue.com).

There are currently 6,000 people on the organ transplant waiting list, and around 400 are likely to die before a suitable organ can be found.

Although One Minute Later isn’t Jim’s story – it’s about a young woman whose life is changed forever by the sudden need for a new heart – Jim does feature as himself in the book. Being the incredible young man he is, instead of simply sitting back and waiting or praying for a new heart to be found, he set up a campaign called Save9Lives (save9lives.com) which the characters in my novel also become involved in.

It’s the first time I’ve weaved fact and fiction like this, and from the responses I’ve already received it seems to have worked well. I’ve been very moved by those who’ve got in touch to say they’ve always resisted being a donor but the book has changed their minds.

Getting to know Jim has had a profound and lasting effect on me, and those who’ve heard him speak on TV and radio find themselves equally moved by his eloquence and courage. He’s highly amused by the idea of being a character in a book.

His presence in the story and of course his input have given it, I believe, a far greater sense of reality than fiction can normally achieve.

It’s not all about waiting for a new heart, however. There are many other elements to it, including the search for an absent father, a murder mystery, a forbidden love story and sheep farming! Yes, really, sheep farming.

This is my 45th novel to be published and probably the one I’m proudest of. It seems to have made a difference to people’s thinking and understanding of the incredibly important issue of organ donation, something we can all sign up to without any sort of financial commitment.

Next year, thanks to the passing of Max and Keira’s Law, England will join Wales in becoming an opt-out nation, meaning we will all be donors unless, as an individual, we make a conscious decision not to be a part of the scheme. For those who are happy with the new law it is still very important to let your loved ones know that you wish to be a donor, because they will still be able to overrule the system in the event of a sudden death.

Having introduced you to the remarkable Jim I feel rather embarrassed about now trying to acquaint you with someone as ordinary as me. I grew up on a council housing estate in Bristol, tragically lost my mother to cancer at the age of nine, and was the kind of teenage rebel my dad really didn’t deserve. My life could so easily have gone down a different path leading to drugs, crime and poverty, but by some miracle I found a job in TV and moved to London at the age of 22.

I worked in news, current affairs and comedy, but mostly I was in drama, which was where I unwittingly did my training as a writer. My first book A Class Apart was published when I was 28 and by the time I was 33 I had become a full-time writer living in the south of France. From there I moved to Los Angeles where I spent the next seven years living amongst the stars before returning to France.

I didn’t marry or have children during that time, but I was always writing. It wasn’t until I was 50 that I met the right man for me, and a couple of years later I returned to the UK. James and I are now married and living in Gloucestershire. I have two fabulous stepsons who are now making their own ways in the world, and two over-indulged dogs who rule the home.

I write about issues which affect me deeply. Recently that’s been the growing number of homeless people in our towns and cities. This – and the number of families driven into poverty by Universal Credit – is what has inspired my next book, Home Truths.

One Minute Later by Susan Lewis is out now (HarperCollins, £12.99)
American epic

JFK’s murder leads to a thrilling chase through the heart of the US in a book which captivates Doug Johnstone

The wide expanses of the American heartlands have always made a great backdrop for resonant, thoughtful fiction, and this week we have two very different novels that use it as a framework to look at the realities of the flawed American dream.

First up is November Road by Lou Berney, the author’s fourth novel, the cover of which comes adorned with praise from the likes of Stephen King and Ian Rankin.

November Road is Berney’s first foray into historical fiction, using the assassination of John F Kennedy as the starting point for a classic noir story. JFK’s death has of course been used a lot by novelists over the years as a way to pick apart the American psyche, but Berney’s take is unusual in that the murder is only tangential to his main action.

Berney establishes early on in his telling that New Orleans boss Carlo Marcello was responsible for hiring JFK’s killer. The story from there is told in three separate narratives that twist around each other and eventually intersect in spectacular fashion.

The first is Frank Guidry, a loyal fixer for Marcello who finds himself getting put in the frame for something he didn’t do. Making a break for it, he flees to Las Vegas as incognito as possible.

At the same time we get the story of Charlotte Roy, a frustrated housewife and mother of two young children in Oklahoma, who makes a spontaneous decision one day to leave her abusive and no-good husband and take the kids to a relative in California.

Fate brings these two together, as Guidry cynically inveigles himself into Roy’s life, using her and the kids to throw possible assassins off his scent.

And one particular assassin, Barone, is very close on his tail, leaving a trail of destruction in his wake as all three of them get involved in a complex cat-and-mouse game across the country.

The thriller elements of November Road are expertly handled, and the switching between narrative voices is wonderfully balanced and nuanced. But the true success of the novel is the unlikely romantic relationship between Guidry and Roy, which could easily have been unconvincing in a lesser writer’s hands.

The prose is elegant and the plotting is endlessly smart, and as it builds to a heart-wrenching climax, Berney keeps the reader guessing about the outcome for his characters.

More understated writing comes in the shape of Nickolas Butler’s subtle and heartfelt Little Faith. Set in rural Wisconsin, the book focuses on Lyle Howde, a contented man approaching old age, whose life is upended when his wayward daughter Shiloh returns home with her son Isaac.

While she’s been away, Shiloh has fallen in with an extremist church and become involved with the charismatic pastor, who believes Isaac has the power to heal the sick. Lyle is initially open-minded about Shiloh’s beliefs, but when Isaac’s health and life are put in danger, he has to make a decision.

This story is used as a tool to examine issues of family and community, and the role that faith and religion can play in both. Is it possible to love unconditionally, and if so, what does that mean for the self? Butler asks these questions with beautiful, rhythmic prose in a tale that tugs at the heartstrings without ever resorting to sentimentality. Wonderful stuff.

The Haunting of Hill House by Shirley Jackson ‘Some houses are born bad’ writes Jackson – and yet four people decide to stay in this one overnight. The unease builds masterfully to a shocking yet strangely satisfying climax. This is quite simply the best haunted house novel ever written.

Rebecca by Daphne du Maurier This plays with key elements of Gothic – the intrusion of the past into an enclosed and atmospheric present – in a brilliantly original way. And Mrs Danvers is terrifying.

The Aspern Papers by Henry James A bit of a stretch to call this a thriller, as there’s more suspense than dread, but it’s a taut and absorbing tale of a researcher’s quest to extract a precious hoard of letters from an old lady and her niece in a crumbling Venetian palazzo.

The Brimstone Wedding by Barbara Vine (aka Ruth Rendell) Two women, one old and one young, gradually share their secrets in a compelling story laced with superstition. I love the fenland setting, which just happens to be within a stone’s throw of where I set my own Gothic tale.

The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner by James Hogg A devout Calvinist is corrupted by a demonic alter-ego, and turns to murder. First published in 1825, this starts slowly but develops into a nightmarish tale of the evils of religious dogmatism.

Wakenhyrst by Michelle Paver is out now (Head of Zeus, £14.99)
Thanks to his roles in X-Men and Star Wars, Oscar Isaac is one of Hollywood’s hottest actors. He tells Gregory Wakeman how choosing the ideal role is just like finding love.

Whether Rebel pilot, folk singer or android inventor, there’s only one criterion Oscar Isaac has when choosing parts.

“It really is like falling in love with somebody,” he says. “I never had a type of person that I was looking to fall in love with, it’s the same thing with a movie or a role.

“I can say, ‘Oh, I want to play this kind of person. Or I want to do this kind of thing.’ But until you read the script and talk to a director you just never know. I know that I’m interested in shaping what I do more. In finding the stories, reading books, reading articles, developing stuff to do. But as far as one type of thing that I want to do, I don’t have that.”

So is he looking to produce or direct his own projects?

“Certainly. Exactly. You know, having a bit more say in how the story gets told. I think that’s definitely something that I’m moving towards.”

Born Óscar Isaac Hernández Estrada in Guatemala in the late 1970s, the family moved to Miami when Isaac was five months old. After supporting parts in films of varying quality, the Coen brothers cast him as the lead in Inside Llewyn Davies and he became an A-lister, starring in the likes of X-Men: Apocalypse, Alex Garland’s Ex Machina and the new Star Wars trilogy.

But Triple Frontier gave Isaac a real rarity in mainstream American cinema, the chance to speak his native Spanish. He plays Santiago ‘Pope’ Garcia, a Special Forces soldier who, alongside Ben Affleck, Charlie Hunnam, Garrett Hedlund and Pedro Pascal, plots to steal millions of dollars from a South American crime lord.

“It immediately makes it feel more authentic,” Isaac says of his character’s Latin heritage. “I talked to [director] JC Chandor about what we could do to complicate the story and I thought one of the things we could do was to call the character Santiago, to make him from the area.

“Instead of an American that is down there taking advantage, he is actually trying to make a difference. Then we’re not just saying that the Latinos are the bad guys and the white Americans are the good guys. But we’re actually showing it as it really is. The armed forces are full of Latinos and that just created even more conflict for my character.”

Chandor’s movies have a lot of integrity. They actually have something to say. Not only did I get to play this incredible guy that has dedicated his life to being a Special Forces warrior, but there’s also an allegorical nature to it. There’s this parable of greed and military intervention and the idea that hubris and inflated power make things seem much more easier than they end up being.”

Triple Frontier, like last year’s Annihilation in which Isaac teamed up with Alex Garland again, are two major releases that bypassed the cinema to go straight to Netflix.

“We’re in a transitional moment, which is an exciting place to be in, because every few decades that happens,” Isaac says. “As an actor and an artist you want more opportunities to tell stories and to be in things. So, from that standpoint, there’s definitely more opportunities to tell different kinds of stories in massive ways because of the different outlets and the different places to do that.

“I also know there’s nothing like sitting in a theatre and watching a story on the big screen.

“I’m also a parent, I don’t get to the theatre very often so it is good to watch movies at home. It is definitely an interesting time. And I don’t have a flag planted in any one way.”

Triple Frontier is now available on Netflix.
We are currently in a mini golden age for superhero movie hints at its eager-to-please, jazz-hands charm. The ominous title of deep-sea diving doc Last Breath girds you for the potential scubageddon ahead. And then there’s Dragged Across Concrete, about to appear on multiplex now showing screens in close proximity to Dumbo, and Lord help any harried parent with young kids in tow who gets the two mixed up.

As well as an evocatively harsh name suitable for any disruptive grindhouse movie from the 1970s, Dragged Across Concrete could also accurately describe the feeling of watching this morally murky and painfully methodical crime thriller, where long and generally static scenes of watchfulness are abruptly punctuated by bursts of harrowing violence. It is a punishingly drawn-out experience but even at an Avengers: Infinity War length of 158 minutes, the plot is deceptively simple: three desperate people who, by doing desperate things, are irrevocably set on a collision course.

Recently released black convict Henry Johns (Tory Kittles) returns to a domestic situation so bleak that he vows to salvage it any way he can. Meanwhile, cynical cop partners Brett Ridgeman (Mel Gibson) and Anthony Lumasetti (Vince Vaughn) are suspended after footage of a racially charged drug bust hits the media. All of them need cash, and are prepared to do anything to get it. For Johns, that means signing up as a getaway driver for a big score, although that makes it sound a lot more glamorous than the reality. For the flinty Ridgeman and glib Lumasetti – after the obligatory scene of handing over their badges – it means trying live on the other side of the line, because if you’re ripping off criminals, where’s the harm?

The casting of Gibson as a borderline racist detective will be too much of a hurdle for some, since it seems to trade on his own well-publicised history of offensive meltdowns. But after a lifetime of playing livewire cops on screen, the actor now seems drained of any maverick energy: Ridgeman is a ravaged relic, his authoritarian push-broom moustache perhaps the only thing holding him together. In his tough-guy leather jacket, Lumasetti has a little more swagger but it slowly leaches away as he edges closer to a point of no return. Even in this morally compromised milieu – Dragged Across Concrete is set in a fictional but recognisably contemporary US city named Bulwark – a crooked cop is viewed as the lowest of the low.

Writer/director S Craig Zahler previously made the gothic western Bone Tomahawk and the skull-rattling prison drama Brawl in Cell Block 99 (which also starred Vaughn in a rare non-motormouth role). Both films were distinctive and effective spins on well-established B-movie genres. With a high-stakes bank robbery at its core, Dragged Across Concrete seems like Zahler ruthlessly deconstructing the heist movie, eliminating rollicking montages in favour of long, inconclusive stakeouts while Ridgeman and Lumasetti try to jigsaw together their target’s plan. It withholds all of the usual joys except the traditional funky soundtrack: there are some welcome appearances from The O’Jays, albeit doled out in carefully measured doses.

Hollowing out the heist movie is not necessarily a bad thing but Zahler injects a callousness that is hard to take. Women, in particular, fare badly: brutalised and humiliated in ways that seem to go beyond merely reflecting the casual brutality of the criminal world. There is also a late stomach-churning scene involving a serrated knife that is unforgettable for all the wrong reasons. Perhaps going to see Dumbo wouldn’t be such a bad idea after all.

★★★★★
Dragged Across Concrete is in cinemas from April 19 @GraemeVirtue

Monty Python’s Life of Brian is in cinemas from April 18

BRIAN STORM
Can it really be 40 years since Life of Brian?
A rousing re-release – not the easiest thing for Michael Palin’s Pontius Pilate to declare, admittedly – seems like final vindication for the inventively blasphemous Monty Python comedy, a film that was originally banned in Ireland and by some wary UK councils but is now so familiar and beloved that these one-off anniversary screenings will likely include some reflective audience participation: “YES! WE ARE ALL INDIVIDUALS!”
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Anxious to find answers

Are we doing enough to help young people with their mental health? Robin Ince wonders whether the old generation need to look at themselves first

Do mental health issues seem more prevalent now or is it because young people feel freer to express their problems rather than keep them festering and hidden? According to recent research by Dr Praveetha Patalay and Dr Suzi Gage, who is also host of the excellent Say Why To Drugs, depressive symptoms and self-harming behaviours increased in mid-adolescence between 2005 and 2015, as did levels of obesity and reduction in sleep.

BBC Radio 3’s Free Thinking assembled a panel to discuss anxiety and the teenage brain. One of the problems of being human is working out the right level of anxiety to thrive. Too much and you remain trapped and terrified in the dark, too little and you can find yourself accidentally falling off the end of a pier into the crashing waves below.

As counsellor Caroline Dower said, “The positive side to anxiety, it mobilises us.” Dower works at Durham University which, like most universities, is seeing a rise in mental health problems among students as we also see a lowering in the age groups that are affected by issues such as anxiety. Host Anne McElvoy stated that the charity Childline delivered more than 21,000 counselling sessions to young people trying to cope with feelings of anxiety, almost double the number compared to two years ago. Is anxiety on the increase or is it people’s willingness to admit they have problems with anxiety changing? Is the perpetual attachment to the voices of social media and the pressures and judgements within that creating a greater feeling of the burden of life? I am sure gruff voices of reason will declare it is the snowflake generation who lack the toughness of those who came before, but it doesn’t take much reading about the make-do-and-mend generations who kept calm and carried on to discover many were unravelling within and often taking it out on those closest to them. Have you ever met anyone who proudly said, “I was beaten as a child and it never did me any harm,” and thought, “There goes a well-balanced man at peace with the world”?

Psychologist Stephen Briers defined when anxiety becomes a clinical problem as when the amplification of normal levels leads to irrationality, physical symptoms and a pattern of avoidance that spirals and heightens the feeling. Until recently, anxiety issues would have been lumped in with depression. Amongst the reasons for teenage anxiety is the stress of childhood’s end, a sudden sense of responsibility and autonomy than can be daunting. Student Ceyda Uzun described this as “the quarter-life crisis”.

Other suspects for the increase in anxiety amongst the young were TV reality shows and social media. According to Briers, “If you are on seven or more social media platforms you are three times more likely to have anxiety problems.” So many ways to compare and contrast your life, so many strangers’ voices to overwhelm and criticise you. There are so many virtual ways for us to be together and yet we feel more atomised.

Dower questioned if we are looking after our children too well. We cushion them and then, when they are free, we accuse them of being children too well. We cushion them and then, when they are free, we accuse them of being snowflakes, a term the panel frowned upon. Perhaps this generation of parents has been so surrounded by different mass media agendas and psychologies of how we might screw up our children that some of the damage will be done by our desperation to avoid screwing them up.

One of the most important points came from an audience member, a former special needs teacher and now therapeutic counsellor who struggled to recognise the world he worked in. University, had very little in the way of attachment and were drug-users and self-harmers. He said he fears that teenage anxiety is an issue that’s “a little bit top-down”. A good society needs to make sure that dealing with anxiety is not a privilege.

Free Thinking is available on the BBC iPlayer @robinince
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Support a Big Issue vendor to become a rising star today!

My name is Bill and I was a vendor in Bournemouth for 6 years. I never thought I’d be selling the magazine but I’m so glad The Big Issue family was there for me.

After 4 years of non-stop work, I had a nervous breakdown which resulted in me having to leave my job. Not only did I lose my income but as it was a live-in job, I also lost my home.

With nowhere to go, my dog Chloe and I set off along the South Coast. We found a cave to stay in but it wasn’t long before we were moved on. By the time we reached Bournemouth we were ill, exhausted and out of money. But after being persuaded to sell The Big Issue by another vendor, everything changed.

I built up my micro business selling The Big Issue and before long I was promoted to Vendor Coordinator. The team at The Big Issue Foundation were so efficient, friendly and understanding. They’ve helped me see a doctor, get treated for Hepatitis C, supported my move into my own place – twice – and even organised a check up with a vet for Chloe.

I’ve taken part in several accredited courses and regularly spoken to nursing students at Bournemouth University about my experiences of living on the street. I’ve spoken on stage in front of 300 people at The Big London Night Walk kick-off, before walking the 13.5 mile route.

After selling the magazine for 6 years, in April last year I landed a job as a brewery tour guide. Less than a year later in March 2019, I won the BH Stars Rising Star Award for my work at the brewery. Thank you so much for helping me get here; thank you so much for not letting me give up.

You can help a Big Issue vendor access the much-needed health and well-being services they need today. Give once or set up a regular donation of £5 a month.

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\[image of vendor\]
Molar opposites

As Shane MacGowan proves, a musician having dodgy teeth signifies something edgy. Malcolm Jack pays tribute to a new group of artists whose dental work leaves much to be desired.

A few years ago Shane MacGowan got new teeth, and while few could question the good wisdom of a man with a smile like a post-apocalyptic skyline belatedly getting his mouth sorted out, equally it was hard not to feel like rock’n’roll lost a little something under the harsh glare of the dentist’s lamp during that gruelling nine-hour procedure.

Chronicle Monkey Tennis-style by Sky Arts in the 2015 documentary Shane MacGowan: A Wreck Reborn, The Pogues frontman’s existential odyssey, likened by experts to climbing the “Everest of dentistry”, saw not only one of the most legendary hellmouths and monuments to excess in all of music at last conquered, but equally one of its most reckless souls finally checked. “We’ve effectively returned his instrument and that will be an ongoing process,” said intrepid dental surgeon Darragh Mulrooney, of the uncertain effect new teeth might have on MacGowan’s signature rasping gummy voice. The civilising changes it will have brought over him can’t have ended there.

Don’t get me wrong – I am a firm advocate of good dental hygiene and regular check-ups, and in no way seek to glamorise the chronic habits which can cause or exacerbate a bad gob. Yet I find there to be something strangely reassuring about dodgy teeth in a musician, especially in this Instagram-vain age when even the most lo-fi of new artists seem to emerge with implausibly perfect bleached and straightened pearly whites. A blackened, crooked sneer or a spiky grim moulds a grand clapped-out tradition in music—a certain quintessence of uncaring. If decadent rock’n’rollers can’t get away without brushing before bed now and again, then what hope for the rest of us?

Which is one, admittedly quite peripheral, reason among many why Fat White Family—a band whose guitarist and sometimes vocalist Saul Adamczewski requires two upper-middle incisors apparently about as much he needs to give two fucks thank you very much—remain a vital force. Newly signed to Domino Records and on the rise from squat-dwelling roots, their new album Serfs Up! sees the scuzz-rocking Londoners deliver more dispatches from down the bin chute of life, now with added queasy electronic beats and death-disco synths. From the ominous Feet to the menacing ¼þƪƷĩƪGŻŻĢàŎƷ’nȃĩrŻűĩǢخدام江区bindung’s dental surgeon and get his own Sky Arts documentary, anyway.

@MBJack

Fat White Family’s new album Serfs Up! (Domino), April 19
Mac DeMarco’s new album Here Comes The Cowboy (Mac’s Record Label), May 10
Slowthai’s debut album Nothing Great About Britain (Method), May 17
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The best-laid plans

Millions of eggs are needlessly binned each year. Just in time for Easter, Hannah Westwater smashes the myth of the shell–by-date

Last week it emerged that Brits are throwing away 720 million eggs each year, worth £139m, through strict observance of best-before dates. It’s a worsening problem: in 2008, only 241 million eggs were being wasted. Experts think the growing popularity of vegetarian diets gave egg sales a boost too, meaning more people than ever are relying on them for protein – but, for at least 29 per cent of us, only for as long as the box says we should. We at The Big Issue are concerned that you might not be getting the most out of your eggs – so this Easter it’s time to set the record straight.

EU regulation demands that best-before dates are 28 days from when they were laid. Ask the Food Standards Agency though, and they’ll tell you not to get in a scramble about it. In 2011 it announced that it was safe to eat eggs after the best before date “as long as they are cooked thoroughly until both yolk and white are solid.”

The team behind food waste-fighting app Too Good To Go agrees. Its research revealed the extent of the surplus egg problem, with co-founder Jamie Crummie commenting: “If you’ve been throwing your eggs in the bin based on the dates on the box, you’ve probably been wasting perfectly good food.”

According to the British Egg Information Service (BEIS), eggs have seen more than a decade of sales growth, up again this year by four per cent (the equivalent of 240 million extra eggs or half a carton for every person in the UK). But this wasn’t always the case. In 1988, then-junior health minister Edwina Currie triggered national hysteria when she told ITN: “Most of the egg production in this country sadly is now infected with salmonella.” By the following day, egg sales had dropped by 60 per cent.

WHAT CAME FIRST?

This time of year wasn’t always chocolate eggs in coloured foil – for Christians, bird eggs at Easter represent Jesus’ resurrection from a sealed tomb and, historically, the first chance to eat eggs after fasting for Lent. The Victorians adapted the tradition with indulgent satin-covered cardboard eggs filled with gifts. But the tradition of painting hard-boiled eggs predates Christianity, with pagan spring festivals featuring decorated eggs as a symbol of new life.

Victorian-era gifts were egg-exceptional

The industry eventually recovered. The BEIS has no evidence of lingering distrust of eggs, and points to a recent change in advice on the consumption of raw or runny eggs. A spokesperson said, as long as an egg has the Lion mark – the food safety scheme that applies to 90 per cent of eggs produced in the UK today – it was laid by a hen vaccinated against salmonella and can be eaten even by pregnant women and babies.

Too Good To Go’s research also found that 39 per cent of those surveyed were familiar with the test that reveals whether eggs are still fresh enough to eat. Keep it in mind this Easter: If eggs sink to the bottom of a bowl of cold water and float on their sides, they are very fresh. If they are less fresh but still fine to eat, they will stand on one end at the bottom. If they float to the surface, they are no longer fresh enough to eat. (This is because as the egg gets older, the size of the air sac inside increases, making it float).

And if your egg is edible, but only just, be tactical with your cooking. It needs to be fresh if you want to fry or poach it; that will ensure you get a neat, rounded shape. If you hard-boil a really fresh egg, peeling off both the shell and the skin is very difficult, but if it’s at least a few days old the skin will become looser and the egg will peel more easily.

Freeze some surplus egg whites now and they could last well beyond the UK’s ever-shifting EU exit date. But the egg industry is threatening to crack under the weight of Brexit chaos. The BEIS says EU legislation bans “barren battery cages”. But the British Egg Industry Council and welfare group Compassion in World Farming both said that plunging out of the EU without a deal would be disastrous for egg and animal cruelty standards.

Supermarkets could be supplied with eggs from non-EU countries, they said, billions of which could be from hens kept in battery cages. They want ministers to guarantee tariffs that will prevent this. (Some campaigners argue that even the UK’s ‘free range’ label does not guarantee good conditions for hens and that consumers should shop from local independents; others say there is no such thing as an ethical egg at all.)

Food waste figures are hanging over this weekend’s Easter egg rolling and decorating contests, but even the shell can be of use. Making a wall of crushed shell around plants deters slugs, snails and caterpillars. Alternatively, egg shell works well as a non-toxic abrasive for scrubbing those hard-to-clean pots and pans. Last year Leicester egg processing plant Just Egg pioneered a new use for the shells: they are ground into a powder and used to reinforce plastic, like chalk. Even the egg membrane is retained as scientists investigate its potential as a wound dressing.

Now you know, so get cracking.

@hannahjtw
Please help us find

Uyen Vu Tu - Dover, Kent

Uyen was last seen in Dover on 15 July last year. She was 15 at the time of her disappearance.

Uyen is urged to call Missing People on 116 000 or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk for advice and support, including the opportunity to send a message in confidence.

Thomas Saunders - Arrochar, Scotland

Thomas has been missing from Arrochar since 16 December 2018. Thomas is 58 years old.

Thomas, please call Missing People on 116 000 or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk for advice and support whenever you feel ready.

Christion Heath - Haringey, London

Christion went missing from Haringey on 22 December last year. He is 31 years of age.

Christion, we are here for you when you are ready; we can listen, talk you through what help you need, pass a message on for you and help you to be safe. Please call or text 116 000.

Aeden Lenz - Kensington, London

Aeden was last seen in Kensington, London on 19 January. She was 45 years old at the time.

Aeden, please call Missing People on 116 000 or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk for advice and support whenever you feel ready.

Paul Carter - Portsmouth, Hampshire

Paul went missing from Portsmouth 12 years ago. He was 22 when he was last seen on 21 April 2007.

Paul, we are here for you when you are ready; we can listen, talk you through what help you need, pass a message on for you and help you to be safe. Please call or text 116 000.

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Thomas, please call Missing People on 116 000 or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk for advice and support whenever you feel ready.

Christion Heath - Haringey, London

Christion went missing from Haringey on 22 December last year. He is 31 years of age.

Christion, we are here for you when you are ready; we can listen, talk you through what help you need, pass a message on for you and help you to be safe. Please call or text 116 000.

Aeden Lenz - Kensington, London

Aeden was last seen in Kensington, London on 19 January. She was 45 years old at the time.

Aeden, please call Missing People on 116 000 or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk for advice and support whenever you feel ready.

Paul Carter - Portsmouth, Hampshire

Paul went missing from Portsmouth 12 years ago. He was 22 when he was last seen on 21 April 2007.

Paul, we are here for you when you are ready; we can listen, talk you through what help you need, pass a message on for you and help you to be safe. Please call or text 116 000.

Hazbi Reci - Croydon, London

Hazbi, 17, has been missing from Croydon since 5 January this year.

Hazbi, we can listen, talk you through what help you need, pass a message for you and help you to be safe. Please call Missing People on 116 000 or email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk.

Call or text 116 000
Email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk
It’s free, 24hr and confidential

Missing People would like to thank The Big Issue for publicising vulnerable missing people on this page.

To help Missing People bring them back to safety text FIND to 70660* to donate £5.

Our free 116 000 number is supported by players of People’s Postcode Lottery.

*Text cost £5 plus your standard network charge. Missing People receives 100% of your donation. Obtain the bill payer’s permission.

www.missingpeople.org.uk
Find out about adopting with PACT at our Online Adoption Information Event

Join us on Tuesday 7th May at 1pm for our live event on www.facebook.com/pactcharity

Learn about the adoption support PACT offers, and put your questions to members of the team

www.pactcharity.org 0300 456 4800

Sponsor a rescued horse

For just £15 you can sponsor a rescued horse or donkey like Maya!

You can also visit them for free at Redwings’ centres in Norfolk, Essex, Warwickshire and Angus.

“Adopting me also makes a great gift!”

To sponsor a horse or donkey at Redwings visit www.redwings.org.uk or call 01508 481000
RESIGNED TO DIE

However, this dog was lucky as we took him in and lovingly nursed him back to health and happiness. But there are many more poor souls out there on the streets of Sri Lanka, clinging to life, that desperately need our help. We are currently caring for over 1000 rescued strays at our beautiful sanctuary in Sri Lanka, all nursed back to health after a terrible start in life. Animal SOS Sri Lanka is a UK Registered Charity dedicated to saving lives and offering a better future for the street animals in Sri Lanka. We also conduct neutering, vaccination and homing schemes. But, to continue, we need YOUR support now.
Donations SAVE lives and there is no greater gift than that.

PLEASE HELP US TO CONTINUE GIVING THESE ANIMALS A FUTURE BY DONATING TODAY. There is no greater gift.

Give more at no extra cost to you:

Gift Aid. I would like Animal SOS Sri Lanka to reclaim tax on this & all future donations until I notify you otherwise. I confirm I am a UK taxpayer & that I pay as much income or capital gains as Animal SOS Sri Lanka will reclaim in the tax year (currently 25p in every £1 donated.)

Signature ........................................ Date ..................................................................

Or make a secure donation online: www.animalsos-sl.com (E) info@animalsos-sl.com (T) 07773 746108

DEPAUL

WHILE YOUR SPARE ROOM WAS EMPTY, SAM SLEPT ON THE STREETS

Last year over 823 volunteer community hosts kept a young homeless person safe by offering them their spare room.

To find out more about becoming a community host in London and the South East:

Text: 07436 162 836 or call 020 7989 1220
email: landlords@nightstop.org.uk
Visit: www.nightstop.org.uk/london
Registered charity number: 80284

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COULD YOU WALK BY?
MANY DID

Victor was found with broken jaw, unable to eat or drink and unresponsive to touch

Please help us to pay for the neutering, treatment and care of abandoned, sick and injured cats, like Victor, in Greece

Please donate online at www.greekcats.org.uk
or send us a cheque to:
GREEK CAT WELFARE SOCIETY,
c/o Fundraising Secretary,
46 Sullington Gardens, Findon Valley,
Worthing, BN14 0HS

email: greekcats1@aol.com To receive regular newsletters become a member: £15 p/a

Registered Charity 1008057

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Human Writes

Human Writes is a long-established organisation founded for the purpose of befriending prisoners on Death Row in the United States through letter-writing. Some US prisons also permit secure e-mail correspondence. Based in the UK, and with a strong team of state co-ordinators, we have members from many countries and our organisation is well-known and internationally respected. Just under 2800 prisoners are currently held in harsh, lonely Death Row conditions in the US and letters from the outside world are often their only contact while they await their execution dates. In the words of a Death Row prisoner in Texas just prior to his 2018 execution “I know that I will soon die at the hands of the State, but to have had someone reach out and take my spirit out of this grey concrete box and into the sunshine while I await my sentence has meant more than I can say.”

If you would like to know more about joining our organisation or becoming a penfriend, please send an SAE to:

Human Writes,
4 Lacey Grove, Wetherby, West Yorks, LS22 6RL,
e-mail humanwritesuk@yahoo.co.uk
or visit our website at www.humanwrites.org

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WITHOUT PEOPLE YOU'RE NOTHING

JOE STRUMMER

Our mission is to provide opportunities to musicians and support to projects around the world that create empowerment through music.

Joe Strummer Foundation
ldfy.co/join-us
Meet Jessica the intrepid shepherd who is changing the face of sheep farming, one night and one duvet at a time.

Fully traceable wool bedding from British Southdown sheep to perfect sleep - and a personal service that's hard to beat!

Sustainable, hypo-allergenic, free from dust mites and just gloriously comfortable sleep all year round - duvets, mattress covers and pillows.


Call Jessica today on 01404 861117 to hear how you could sleep like a lamb.

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News from the Intrepid Shepherd

Just Meant to Be
Every lambing year brings something different. One year, I faced toxoplasmosis which resulted in weak, feeble lambs. Another year I met Schmallenberg and had to deal with deformed and dying lambs. Last year we had a myriad of mal-presentations, so much so that I gave up counting, but reckon that of the 40 ewes in the barn, only 5 or 6 lambed normally. I put this down to the fact that I had to keep the ewes in the barn during and between the 2 snow storms which meant not enough exercise and natural movement during the final stages of pregnancy. But who knows? It might have been some other reason entirely but it is rather satisfying blaming it all on the Beasts from the East.

But no matter what, there was always 3 particular sorts of lambs and this is a constant year on year:

The first is that lamb that arrives normally and all looks like it should be just fine. But it's not. It has a look in its eyes that says “I don’t want to be on this planet!”. And no matter what it has or what you do – a wonderful, caring nurturing, milky mum, heat lamps, colostrum, anti-biotics, spectam, kick-start, warming boxes – you name it, but that little lamb will still just slip away. Not meant to be.

The second is the exact opposite. This lamb might have had a really bad time coming into the world – mal-presented and needed lambing ropes and all manner of human intervention. Its mum probably then rejected it – usually butting and kicking it viciously for no apparent reason. Once rescued from the infuriated ewe, the lamb ought to give up but it has a look in its eyes that says “nothing is going to stop me from living”. And it does. Against all odds, it grows up into a stonking great healthy sheep. Just meant to be.

And then there is the third type of lamb – outwardly like any other but there is just something special about the little creature and it wins your heart. It might be the way it holds it head as it nods off to sleep or waggles its tail as it feeds. Often its allure is intangible but it's the lamb that I imagine in my mind’s eye when, after a full night of exhausting lambing, I am finally in bed at 5.30 in the morning and trying to get a couple of hours sleep before it all kicks off again the next day.

Jessica
CRYPTIC CLUES

Across
1. Innocent (9)
2. Be patient (4)
9. Tally sheet (9)
11. Bird of prey (6)
12. Cosily (6)
13. Accuse publicly (6)
16. Sevenfold (8)
20. Give (6)
21. Lasso (6)
23. Dresser (9)
24. Part of sleeve (4)
25. Transom (9)

Down
2. Publican (8)
3. Optical illusion (6)
4. Prize draw container (5,3)
5. Foam (4)
6. High-kicking dance (6)
7. Enacts (anag) (6)
10. Decorative border (4)
14. Unnecessary (8)
15. Standards of judging (8)
16. Consolation (6)
17. Cleanse (6)
18. Poisonous tree (4)
22. Row (4)

CROSSWORD

To win a Chambers English Dictionary, send completed crosswords to:
The Big Issue Crossword, second floor, 43 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 1HW by April 23.
Include name, address, phone and issue number.

SUDOKU

Issue #1353 answers

I was working as a lorry driver but on zero-hours contracts and just before Christmas the work was dropping off. All I was being offered was weekend shifts, like 1am on a Saturday or 11pm on a Sunday. I ran out of money so basically I was left high and dry. I was living in a house but I had to move out. I managed to get a caravan and I’m still living in it at the moment, in the woods.

The Big Issue is my only source of income now. Basically it means I don’t end up sleeping in shop doorways. I would be homeless without it. The driving work has left me with piniformis syndrome, which desk workers and drivers are prone to. It causes inflammation and a lot of pain. The left side of my foot is numb and it’s uncomfortable. I thought if I tried to get some other work that didn’t involve sitting down then it might get better. Selling The Big Issue I’m stood there for four to six hours a day but it’s not getting any better. So I’m at a bit of a crossroads now, deciding what to do next.

I used to be a landscape gardener. I just find things a lot harder and my disability, although it’s not completely debilitating, is causing me pain and discomfort. I studied organic horticulture in Ireland and I’ve done organic farming for about 10 years. I still have an interest in it and I’d really like to have my own garden one day. When I lived in Ireland I was growing food for myself and my family and we would exchange it or sell it at the local market.

When I was in Ireland I was with my ex-partner and my son and daughter. I built a round house and that’s when I started gardening. My children were born in Ireland and I delivered both of them. I almost dropped my son after I delivered him, he was like a wet bar of soap. I thought, “No way do I want that responsibility ever again.” So we organised a midwife the next time but on the day she was late and the birth was progressing. In the end, after saying I never wanted to do it again, I ended up praying that she wouldn’t come in the middle of it because that would have been an intrusion on something that worked perfectly well itself.

My daughter is 18 now and my son’s 22. He’s in Plymouth doing a university course and my daughter’s in Totnes so they’re not far away from Exeter. Here on my pitch I’ve got a few regulars. There’s a lady who’s partially sighted called Dorothy. And there’s another lady called Caroline who buys me a cup of tea. Starbucks are very helpful, they let me use the toilet. I’d really like to thank the people of Exeter for being so kind to me.

When I was driving, at weekends I’d be working the graveyard shift, sleeping in the day and I’d go through the whole week without seeing anyone. I was completely isolated, next thing you’re depressed because you don’t have a social life. I was buying beer and as soon as I came home I was drinking a four-pack every night. Then I realised that I hadn’t had a day without alcohol for two years. I’ve stopped that now, and I haven’t had a drink in 17 months.

Interview: Sarah Reid
Photo: Andrew Butler

THE BIG ISSUE MANIFESTO

A hand up, not a handout...
Our sellers BUY every copy of the magazine for £1.25 and sell it for £2.50.

Trade, not aid...
Which is why we ask you to ALWAYS take your copy of the magazine. Our sellers are working and need your custom.

Poverty is indiscriminate...
That is why we provide ANYONE whose life is blighted by poverty with the opportunity to earn a LEGITIMATE income.

The right to citizenship...
The Big Issue Foundation, our charitable arm, helps sellers tackle social and financial exclusion.

Prevention...
The Big Issue Invest offers backing and investments to social enterprises, charities and businesses which deliver social value to communities.
Now is our opportunity to end the suffering caused by leprosy

Let's create a leprosy-free world
For thousands of years leprosy has been the scourge of poverty-stricken communities across the world. The disease frequently leads to severe, life-changing disabilities and those who suffer from it are often excluded by their community, and struggle to fend for themselves.

A leprosy-free world is now within sight
Just a few decades ago, more than five million people were being diagnosed with leprosy every year, their lives destroyed physically, emotionally and socially by the disease. Today, this number has reduced significantly but remains stubbornly at over 200,000 new cases annually, worldwide. St Francis Leprosy Guild is committed to achieving a leprosy-free world and we genuinely believe it is possible, if only people like you are prepared to help.

Early detection can stop leprosy in its tracks
By supporting early detection and treatment - before the disease takes hold - you can help to prevent untold suffering. If you are able to send a donation of just £30 today, you will help us support ongoing health initiatives, such as the hospital ship that serves patients in the Amazon region.

123 years dedicated to the relief of suffering
St Francis Leprosy Guild has been dedicated to the relief of suffering caused by leprosy for more than a century. We have supported the care of hundreds of thousands of people, and helped to restore their dignity. Today we are determined to build on our legacy and seize the opportunity to help eradicate leprosy once and for all.

Winning the battle against leprosy
- 1980s - some 5.2 million cases of leprosy reported annually.
- 1995 - World Health Organisation extends free access to leprosy treatments.
  - 16 million people cured of leprosy in past 20 years.
  - Today, over 200,000 new cases diagnosed annually, worldwide.
  - Early diagnosis and treatment are key to total eradication.

Help to beat leprosy for good
The hospital ship is just one of around 60 inspirational partners organisations supported by St Francis Leprosy Guild, which are working with remote and marginalised communities in countries such as India and Brazil. Please send £30 today to help this essential work continue. Together, let's seize the opportunity to create a leprosy-free world and help put an end to people's suffering at last.

I WANT TO SEE A LEPROSY-FREE WORLD. HERE IS MY GIFT TO HELP.
Please donate at www.justgiving.com/stfrancisleprosyguild or return this form with your gift.

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First Name
Surname
Address
Postal code
Email
Telephone

Here is my gift of: £30 £60 £100 Other £

By Cheque/Postal Order/CAF Voucher (to St Francis Leprosy Guild) Visa/MasterCard/Amex/Maestro (delete as appropriate)

Card no. Expiry date Issue date Security code (3 digits on the back of your card, 4 on front of Amex)

Name on card

Thank you!

ST FRANCIS LEPROSY GUILD

Please fill in your name and address. We will never pass on your details to any other organisation and will treat them with respect. We will use the personal information you have provided to process your donation and to contact you with news of our work. If you would prefer not to receive further communications please tick this box or you can call us on 020 8969 1345 to let us know which communications you would like to receive. To find out more about how we use your privacy visit www.stfrancisleprosy.org.