

ABOUT BIG ISSUE NORTH MAGAZINE AND OUR CHARITY

How do you decide on the content of the magazine?

Big Issue North is produced by a small but experienced team of journalists. The editorial content of the magazine is a broad mix of local news, features and arts coverage. It is vibrant, entertaining, informative and thought-provoking – and aims to appeal to a diverse readership.



Is Big Issue North just about homelessness?

No. The magazine is a broad mix of news, features and arts coverage focusing on a range of social issues which can include homelessness.

What does the Big Issue North Trust do?

Big Issue North Trust is a small registered charity (no. 1056041) which raises funds from the public to support the sellers of the magazine. The charity pays for some staff time to support vendors in a crisis, undertake assessments and action plans, and signpost and help people to access other services. It also helps to pay for some vendor projects such as breakfast clubs and arts projects.

Who pays staff costs?

Big Issue North has three main income streams – income from the sale of the magazine to the vendors, income from selling advertising space in the magazine and a contract with Big Issue North Trust to provide support to the vendors. Big Issue North is a social business – which means that it reinvests any profits it makes back into the business. It does not distribute profits to shareholders.

BIG ISSUE NORTH
TRUST

Vendors tell us that selling Big Issue North increases their self-confidence and motivates them to change their lives. Vendors are working not begging.

BIG ISSUE NORTH
THE INDEPENDENT STREET PAPER | WORKING NOT BEGGING

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BIG ISSUE NORTH

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ABOUT BIG ISSUE NORTH

Big Issue North is a weekly magazine sold by over 260 people in towns and cities across the north of England. It gives people who have few other options the opportunity to earn an income. Selling the magazine increases confidence, helps people develop their skills, and creates opportunities for people to change their lives.



Are vendors given the magazine or do they buy it?

Vendors buy each magazine from one of our offices for £1.25 and sell it to the public for £2.50, keeping the £1.25 profit they make.

Where can vendors sell?

Vendors sell on agreed pitches in city centres and out of town areas across the North West, Yorkshire and the Humber. There are currently approx. 350 pitches across our region. Big Issue North works with shopkeepers, city centre management teams and local agencies to agree pitch locations.

Why do vendors have to sell outside in poor weather?

We are legally able to sell Big Issue North magazine on any public thoroughfare but we rely on the goodwill of local retailers to provide us with pitches which are undercover.

How much do vendors earn?

There is no such thing as a typical week's income. How much vendors make depends on a number of factors, from the individual vendor's sales skills to the weather or the time of year.

What is the employment status of vendors?

Big Issue North vendors are self employed.

Can people selling Big Issue North claim benefits?

Yes. Like anyone self-employed, vendors can claim a range of in-work benefits such as Working Tax Credits and Housing Benefit. We ask all vendors to inform their Jobcentre as soon as they sign up to sell Big Issue North.

Do you provide information to the police or benefits agency?

We cooperate with any legal request for information from statutory agencies. Some vendors will ask us for information which we provide – such as proof they are vendors – for statutory agencies

How long can people sell the magazine for?

We do not have a fixed time limit on how long people can sell Big Issue North for. We have tried this in the past and found that people who weren't ready to move on lost the stability of a regular income that selling the magazine provides. However, all vendors have their needs assessed and are supported to take opportunities to improve their lives so they are no longer reliant on selling Big Issue North. This may include access to drug or alcohol treatment, training and educational classes such as ESOL, or seeking alternative employment.

Do vendors have to adhere to any rules?

We have a set of Vendor Expectations which all vendors have to abide by. E.g. we expect vendors not to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs that affects their ability to work. If people consistently breach the Code of Conduct they may be asked to stop selling Big Issue North.

ABOUT OUR VENDORS

Who do you work with?

People may not be able to access mainstream employment because of many reasons: their mental health, drug or alcohol dependence, lack of skill or because they are new to the country.

This often results in homelessness or people living in poor quality temporary accommodation. We work with all these people.



Are all Big Issue North vendors homeless?

Vendors do not have to be homeless to sell Big Issue North. Some are in private or council tenancies and are at risk of becoming homeless, others are homeless and living in hostels, staying with friends of family or sleeping rough.



Why do you work with so many people who are not British?

In January 2007 Bulgaria and Romania joined the European Union and its citizens became able to move and reside freely in any other EU member state including the United Kingdom. In January 2014 all transitional controls in regard to employment and access of UK services were lifted. We have seen an increase in the number of EU nationals selling the magazine since the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU.

Do you check if someone is legal to work first?

Vendors of Big Issue North are self-employed (they buy their magazines from us for £1.25 and sell them on for £2.50 – the profit is theirs) and we are not required to check their residency status and do not do so.

ABOUT THE SUPPORT WE OFFER

What support do you offer to the vendors?

We work with every vendor to help them identify the issues they face and their aspirations. We then help them develop an action plan to improve their lives. We support vendors to access services and take up opportunities such as basic skills training and English language classes. Across our offices we run a number of projects such as breakfast clubs, computer suites and arts projects.

We see vendors when they come to buy their magazines and we also visit them on their pitches.

We offer crisis support both in the office and when we see them on outreach.

We offer follow-up appointments to vendors to help them achieve their overall goals.