

# FRIENDS OF BIG ISSUE NORTH

AUTUMN 2018



## Vendor Victoria brushes up her language skills

**Since it began more than 20 years ago, Big Issue North has seen the vendors who sell the magazine change over the years. Now, we know that more than half of our vendors come from overseas – looking to improve their lives. Selling Big Issue North helps such people earn an income.**

And we believe that part of the role of Big Issue North, and our Trust, is to support vendors to integrate into life in the UK. According to our latest audit, 93% of vendors for whom English is not that their first language felt that selling the magazine improved their communication skills.

To hear more, we spoke to four vendors who weren't born in the UK, but now sell in Manchester, Blackpool, Nantwich and Wigan, to see

how selling Big Issue North has aided their integration into British life.

Victoria, who sells the magazine in Burnage, Manchester, told us that selling the Big Issue North as a way of earning an income has served as a deterrent from begging and illegal activities. She said: "I don't want people to see me begging and doing bad things. I sell the magazine because it is a job, to pay my rent and to help the family. I enjoy selling it."

"Selling the magazine is helping me to learn English too. I can't speak much English at the moment, just the basics. I understand a lot but I can't always explain what I mean in English."

Victoria has been helped on her journey, and with her language skills, by the

relationships she's built with her regular customers in Burnage. "People have been so nice. They are polite, they speak to me and they are kind and patient with me. They try to find different ways to explain things to me. Like a woman was asking me about children and I didn't understand, so she mimed holding a baby."

Victoria had a simple message for her customers: "Thank you so much for being there and encouraging me and taking care of me."

Denisa, a Roma vendor selling in Nantwich, Cheshire, had a similar story – that chatting with her customers makes a real difference. Denisa said: "I like speaking English to my customers and learning this language. That's how I learned English – through selling the magazine and then asking customers how I use certain words."

"Thank you so much, for being there, for encouraging me, talking to me and taking care of me."

Leventica, who has a pitch by the seaside in Blackpool continued the theme, explaining: "I learned English from selling the magazine. People speak all the time with me and that is very good. When I arrived from Romania I spoke a little English but it has got better."

So, if you're out on the streets of the north and buying a Big Issue North from a vendor whose first language isn't English, then remember – buying the magazine helps them to earn an income, but a five minute chat can help them to learn English and settle into a new country too!

## Letter from Fay

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter!

I hope you've enjoyed your summer, and made the most of the heatwave. While it's nice for many of us to be able to enjoy the sunshine, it's important to remember the challenges our vendors face to sell the magazine in all weathers – from extreme heat to driving rain!

Inside this edition, you'll hopefully find some inspiring stories, and see how your generous donations help.

**Fay Selvan,**  
Big Issue North Trustee



In the last year, we have referred vendors to English as a Second Language classes on 17 occasions. To enable us to keep on supporting vendors, please donate to Big Issue North Trust today.

## AROUND THE REGIONS



In **LEEDS**, Stanley's Companions provided dog food for vendors' pets and bottles of water for vendors during the heatwave. A huge thank you from staff and vendors (and their dogs!) to Sarah and her Chocolate Labrador Stanley!

In **LIVERPOOL**, a Big Issue North vendor was welcomed on site at the Africa Oye Festival to sell the magazine in the crowd.

In **MANCHESTER**, Street Noise opened its doors once again to make music and raise money for vendors of Big Issue North. With thanks to and everyone who came for an amazing night with the purpose of changing lives!

Vendors in **SHEFFIELD** have picked their new charity as part of vendors ongoing fundraising initiative. This quarter's recipients will be St Luke's Hospice, chosen by Carol, who sells the magazine in Worksop.

Big Issue North has been arranging to visit schools and youth groups for the new school year. In the next three months, we have three visits lined up in the **MANCHESTER** area. If your school or youth group is interested in receiving an age-appropriate talk on what we do, please email our team at [fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com](mailto:fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com).

# SELLING PUTS VENDORS ON ROAD TO RECOVERY

For some vendors, life on the streets can go hand-in-hand with addiction issues. Supporting more than 1,000 vendors each year, Big Issue North helps those facing an uphill journey to recover on a daily basis.

We spoke with vendors affected by addiction around our region, to hear their views, how they feel about the road to recovery and their hopes for the future.

### IAN, PRESTON (right)

After losing his wife in 2010, Ian found himself turning to drink to help him cope. As a result, he lost his tenancy and faced life on the streets. However, thanks to income from selling the magazine, Ian is now accommodated in a flat.

Ian said: "This gives me a reason to get up and get out of bed. I'm here at half six, seven, every morning without fail – rain or shine. Selling the magazine helps pay the bills, for food, food for my dog, Pepper, and council tax."

### PHIL, LEEDS

"I first started using drugs when I was on the street because it helped me to get to sleep. People think it's your own fault, but I don't think anyone sets out to be a drug addict. It's just some people learn to cope with their problems differently.

"Some people turn to drugs thinking



it will make a difference, and for a long time it does. But when you come down off the drugs, your problems are still there. But it's nice to know that I can rely on Big Issue North. If I'm having a down day, it's comforting that I have somewhere warm to rest after selling the magazine and a kind ear to listen to my concerns to help me support myself while trying to get clean."

### LES, LIVERPOOL

"I've sold the magazine for a long time - 20 years in fact. I was even selling it when it was 80p! I've met some lovely people over the years. The support I have received from staff and customers has

In the last year, Big Issue North staff have supported **21** drug and alcohol service referrals

## Working for Big Issue North

Taking inspiration from the weekly vendor profiles that appear in Big Issue North, we spoke to Angarad Griffith, who works as a Service Coordinator in Liverpool, to see what life's like from the other side of the sales counter.

### Why did you choose to work for Big Issue North?

I was passionate about working with vulnerable adults, especially people affected by homelessness. Big Issue North gives those with no other options a chance of employment and support.

### What are the best parts of your job?

I have really learned how much one chat can make a big impact on someone. Especially when they're suffering with

mental health issues, showing someone that you care about what they are going through is so important.

### What do you find hardest about the role?

You can't help everybody. You want to see everyone get off the streets and into work, but it simply isn't possible.

### What has been your favourite moment during your time with us?

Watching one of Liverpool's longest serving vendors decide to take the plunge and head to rehab. After more than 20 years selling Big Issue North he decided it was his time to take a chance to turn his life around. Hearing him chat about how well he is doing after just a few short weeks has been amazing.



### What would you say to people who haven't bought a street paper before?

Before I worked here I had no idea how much spending £2.50 on a magazine gives vendors - beyond just an income. Go and buy one, have a chat and leave with the thought you have made a difference, no matter how small.

### Is it important that people who buy the magazine take it?

You wouldn't go into Costa and not take your coffee. In the long run not taking the magazine does more harm than good.

# IDORS VERY

just been amazing.”

“I have had some difficulties in the past and my lifestyle became chaotic. It got to a point where I was concerned that I would hurt myself. So I’m entering into detox. I know that this is for the best. This time I’m finally ready.”

## CHARLIE, MANCHESTER

“I have battled with my drinking for a long time. But now, I’m seeing a light at the end of the tunnel and it’s given me hope. If you would have told me a year ago that I was going to be at college and I could be sober, I’d have said you were having a laugh. I feel like I’ve woken up from a nightmare.”

## STU, SHEFFIELD

“I’ve been a drug addict since I was 14. My hope for the future is to get back into the work I was doing before, which was drug and alcohol counselling. I ran a recovery service for about a year. So I’ve been on both sides of the fence.”

# SIMON SHARES HIS STORY

For many, September is a time for change and new challenges. For one vendor, new challenges are becoming a regular occurrence. Simon, who sells the magazine in Harrogate, North Yorkshire was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in the last year, and is all too aware of the demands that change and challenge can bring. We had a chat with Simon to see how his diagnosis has affected him and what life is now like selling the magazine.

Simon said: “I used to stand up all day long, but these days, I have to sit down on a stool that I have on my pitch. It’s all new to me, and I’m finding things out about it every day, finding my body’s limits. My body just doesn’t do what I want it to and it gets me really frustrated.

“People have responded well apart from the odd kids who snigger and think that I’m drunk, especially when I’m walking. It used to annoy me but I’m used to it now – it’s their problem not mine.”

Staff at our Leeds office have been working to make life as easy as possible for Simon. From signposting and liaising with housing



support workers to making suitable arrangements, Simon now accepts support from a number of different places, after years of declining any help on offer.

“Staff at the office have been really helpful. At the moment I’m living in a first floor flat and I have to drag myself up the stairs using the banisters. The people in the office are helping me to get a ground floor flat.”

Since Simon chose to share

his story through Big Issue North, he has been flooded with messages of support from those who know him as a permanent fixture in Harrogate.

One reader said: “You’re such a great guy - always a smile for everyone. You always make my trip into town more enjoyable. I always admire your tenacity and hard work. Sending you lots of well wishes. Don’t give up.”



## Manchester Day Parade gets surprise visitor

This summer, Big Issue North took part in the Manchester Day Parade for the third year running.

This year’s theme was ‘Word on the Streets’, and it inspired vendors to attend art sessions to make their costumes, supported by Big Issue North staff and Walk the Plank production company.

On the day itself, around 15 vendors and staff took to the streets of the city to join the celebration – confirming our

place as a fundamental part of Manchester life.

Once the parade was over, we received a surprise visit from the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham! Andy has been a valuable supporter of our work, especially since taking part in the Big Sell earlier this year, spending time on the streets, and getting a taste of what it was like to sell the magazine in the rain to the Mancunian public.

If you would like to get hands on helping out at events like this, then get in touch with us by emailing [fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com](mailto:fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com).

# Putting the issue of begging in the spotlight

As begging has increased, we're finding that the media is increasingly interested in hearing how this activity impacts on those whose livelihood depends upon working on the streets.

Recently, Murf, who sells the magazine in Sheffield City Centre, spoke to BBC Look North on the topic. Having spent time on the streets himself, Murf was well placed to explain how hard it is to find a way out of begging, and how working – by selling Big Issue North – has helped him.

To educate the public about what help is available to people going through hard times in Sheffield, we are working with HelpUsHelp, a campaign highlighting the resources available should people wish to lend a hand in their local community, without giving cash.

Big Issue North staff and vendors recently spent time filming a promotional video for HelpUsHelp, discussing the negative effect that begging has on vendors as they try to earn an income on their pitch.

To request a talk for your organisation, event or community group, please email [fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com](mailto:fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com)

## How to donate

We are so grateful to everyone who donates to us, if you haven't donated already, here are some ways to support our vendors.

To set up a standing order, please fill in the form enclosed with this newsletter or call 0161 848 2420.



You can also donate by mobile phone, just text BITN18 and the amount you wish to donate e.g. £20 to 70070



Please make out donations by cheque to Big Issue North Trust and send it to 463 Stretford Road, Manchester, M16 9AB.



For more ways to raise funds for us please contact [fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com](mailto:fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com)



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Go to [www.easyfundraising.org.uk](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) today!

## Perfectly stationed pitches

Those of you who regularly arrive by train to Leeds and Manchester Piccadilly may have noticed that we now have vendors inside the stations, thanks to a new partnership with Network Rail.

These great pitch locations are proving very popular with the public, thanks in part to the hard work of the vendors



selling them their magazine.

Stephen (above), who sells in Leeds Station, said: "I'm under some shelter, which is good. The staff in the station have been really nice, really supportive. Thank you ever so much for buying the Big Issue North off me."

We are always on the lookout for perfect new pitches for vendors, so if you have somewhere in mind that you think would be a great place for someone to sell magazines, get in touch by emailing [fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com](mailto:fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com).

## BIG ISSUE NORTH SHOP

**Buy something BIG.**

Take a look at our shop for photographic prints, canvas tote bags, back issues and more.

All profits made from our shop are reinvested back into Big Issue North, ensuring we can continue to support people to earn an income.

shop.bigissuenorth.com

### THE TRUSTEES

Big Issue North Trust is supported by the Zochonis Charitable Foundation  
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