

FRIENDS OF BIG ISSUE NORTH

AUTUMN 2019

BIG ISSUE NORTH HELPS VENDOR TO MAKE HER DREAMS A REALITY

Leventica Marin, 27, has sold the magazine in Liverpool for several years.

Things have not been easy for Leventica, who grew up in Romania with her aunt. She says Roma children are treated differently and do not have equal access to education – she barely went to school. “Life in Romania is difficult and it is more difficult when you are Roma,” she says. “They do not accept you there.”

Leventica moved to London when she was 16 and started selling The Big Issue. In 2011, she and her parents moved to Liverpool. There, she met her husband, who persuaded her to move back to Romania, but he became violent and she had to flee. “I would not like to remember again what I have been through. It was very difficult,” she says. To cope, she fantasised about securing a job and a house for her children. “To live as a family together, to have what we need, never to say again: ‘How are we going to eat today?’”

She returned to Liverpool after a few years and started selling Big Issue North. It was through our office that she learned about the Fair Work event, established by two John Moores University lecturers to “raise aspirations that Roma people can do more, that they are capable of more.”

Staff in our office encouraged Leventica to attend, and even accompanied her to the event. Once there, she completed her CV and applied for a level one interpreting course. She dropped into various businesses on her way home, including a local fast food restaurant, where she got an interview and then a job.



She’s currently on six months’ probation and limited hours, but she’s determined to make the job work.

“I just want to work normally,” she says. “I love it – just to feel like a normal person, have some money and have a good future for my children, so that they do not have to go through what I went through.”

She’s keen to continue her interpreting course and learn to drive. “When I come here in the Big Issue North office, I never felt like I needed to close my heart. I never felt scared, I never felt different. I was always welcomed here. I love the people in the office,” she says. “My dream has always been to work and to bring a better life to my children. For years I did my best, and thanks to the support I got from the Big Issue North office, this year was mine. My dreams are becoming reality!”

Leventica is currently undertaking a translating

course at Liverpool Community College, and will be volunteering in our Liverpool office. She is hoping this will bring her closer to her goal of working as an interpreter.

Your generosity helps us to support vendors like Leventica to access life-changing education.

To make a donation, text BINORTH to 70970 to give £5, visit justgiving.com/BigIssueNorth or see the back of this newsletter.

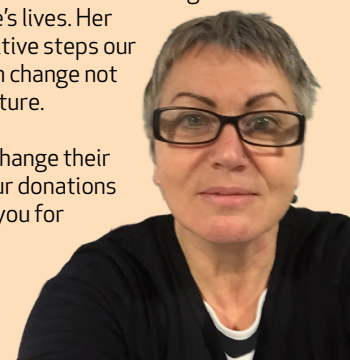
Letter from Fay

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter!

Stories like Leventica’s show the difference that selling Big Issue North can make to people’s lives. Her inspiring story is typical of the positive steps our vendors make, and of the way it can change not just lives, but aspirations for the future.

None of our work to help vendors change their lives would be possible without your donations of money, time and skills, so thank you for your ongoing support.

Fay Selvan,
Big Issue North Chief Executive



VENDOR REP SCHEME ALLOWS VENDORS TO BUY MAGAZINES LOCALLY

In the past month, two vendors in Manchester city centre have started selling magazines every Saturday to other vendors. For vendors with mobility issues or who do not want to spend much time away from their pitch, this saves them the time and trouble of visiting the office.

We spoke to the new reps, Colin and Chris (pictured), who also sell the magazine while they are distributing Big Issue North to fellow vendors.

“I am really enjoying it,” Colin told us. “There’s one lad who always comes and buys twelve and another guy that buys eight. I was the one who put the idea forward. In Birmingham, they have a similar outreach programme and opened a shop where vendors could get their issues after the main office closes. I wanted to start something similar up here, and I’m trying to build it up at the moment. I pick up the magazines on the Friday and take them out on the Saturday, then sell them outside Primark in Piccadilly between 10am and midday. Then I sort the money out when I get

home and take it into the office.”

“It’s great, it’s a really good idea,” Chris agreed. “The office moved recently and it’s a bit of a distance. I sell the magazine outside of Selfridges from midday to 2pm. Some Saturdays I sell out and other days I sell about half, it just depends. I’d do anything to help Big Issue North. I’ve been working for

Big Issue North for about seventeen years now. It’s helped me so much with my lifestyle and just in providing support. I think it’s really good, what they do.”

Of course, our doors are still open to vendors six days a week, so they can buy their magazines, have a chat and get help with any support they need.



FRESHFIELDS LAW FIRM OPENS ITS DOORS TO VENDORS



Since June, Freshfields, a global law firm, has opened the doors of its Manchester office to Nicolaus, a Big Issue North vendor.

Nicolaus is the first of our vendors to take part in a new partnership between Freshfields and Big Issue North. Once a week, staff at the firm get the chance to buy the magazine from the comfort of their offices, and Nicolaus gets the

chance to work in a new environment.

Nicolaus said: “I’ve been selling here at the Freshfields office for five weeks. I come in on a Thursday at lunchtime and sell the magazine in the canteen. They have been really good – I arrive at 11.30am and I’ve got everything set up for me. I love it – everyone is really friendly.

“Big Issue North sorted everything out for me to work here. They’ve helped me to get a contactless card reader, because a lot of the staff here use cards instead of cash.

“I normally sell outside Booths in Hale Barns, but now on Thursdays I’m here instead. It’s good, because I get different people buying the magazine each week, I’m getting to know people and starting to sell well. When I started, a lot of people hadn’t heard of Big Issue North, but now they’re getting to know about it.

“Soon, I’m going to start doing some work shadowing here on the days that I sell the magazine. It means I’ll sell at lunchtimes in the canteen, and then I can pick an area to do work shadowing in the afternoon. I just need to pick something. Ideally I want to develop my English, but really I’ll do anything that will help me get a job in the future.”

“I want to get a steady job because I want to be able to sustain my family. I’ll do whatever it takes to do that. I’ve got two daughters and another baby due next month.

“When I’ve finished my time at Freshfields, I would love to encourage other vendors to do it. It’s a great experience and a really nice office, and the people are amazing.”

Olivia Balson, Freshfields Global Centre Director, said: “We’re really proud and pleased to host a Big Issue North vendor in our Manchester office. Freshfields is a global law firm and its office in Manchester has more than 750 people – each of us wants to support Big Issue North and our local community.

“We’re embracing the positive change for us and for Nicolaus by having him as part of our office – he has quickly become a part of our firm and we are looking forward to continuing to support him and others in the future.”

If your organisation would like to get involved with our corporate partnership schemes, email us at fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com to find out more.

BIG ISSUE NORTH TRUST SUPPORTS VENDORS BATTLING ADDICTION

In 2017, an investigation into deaths of homeless people in England and Wales found that the fatality rate among this group had increased by 24% since 2013, a figure rising to 42% in the case of drug-related deaths. This put the life expectancy of a homeless man at 44 and a homeless woman at 42, compared to the national average of 76 for men and 81 for women. Drug dealers are known to target vulnerable homeless people, deliberately encouraging addiction.

The Big Issue North Trust works with vendors who are battling addiction to provide the support they need to break their habit and transform their lives.

Stuart, a former vendor in Sheffield, spoke to us while stopping by the Big Issue North Sheffield office to catch up with the staff who helped him to turn his life around. "I've been a drug addict since I was fourteen," he told us, but thanks to support from the Archer Project, where the office is based, he's now living in supported accommodation

and working on getting clean. "I've been wanting to do it since about ten years ago," he said. "I'm doing a lot better than I was two years ago."

Stuart's story is similar to many of our vendors: "I was homeless and I needed some money to keep a roof over my head," he explained. He's keen to emphasise, though, that working with Big Issue North isn't just about selling the magazine. "There's a lot more to it than it seems," he said. "It's no use just coming in and going out and selling the magazines day in and day out, you have to use the staff for support, the networks and stuff that they've got."

"Otherwise, if you're just coming in to sell your mag and not receiving the support, you just stay static, and you don't want to do that. If I wasn't doing Big Issue, I wouldn't have come to Archer Project and I wouldn't have got in touch with Framework, who've got me the place where I live now."

MOHAMMED MAKES HIS HOUSE A HOME

In Sheffield, vendor Mohammed has been supported by our office staff to move into a council house.

And, through a referral made by our staff to BESOM, a local charity that supports people experiencing poverty, and the amazing generosity of his customers, Mohammed has also managed to furnish it with a bed, sofa, table and chairs, microwave, fridge and freezer.

Mohammed is in no doubt that he would not have been able to make the change without the support of Big Issue North. "The staff in the office help me with things like applying for benefits. They are wonderful, kind people – they have saved my life."

Now, Mohammed has moved in, he is focusing on making his house a home:



"I am currently redecorating my new house. I enjoy decorating. I used to be a painter and decorator before I came to Sheffield."

ARTICLE INSPIRES CHILDREN TO CHANGE

In a recent issue of the magazine, we printed a piece by Neal Layton, author of *A Planet Full of Plastic*, a book for children about plastic pollution and how to tackle it, in which he offered some advice to our young readers on how to cut down their own plastic use.

We were delighted to hear that Year 2 pupils at Unity Community Primary School in Cheetwood studied the article in their literacy lessons, complementing their recent lessons on the impact of single-use plastics. Assistant Headteacher, Anne-Marie

Mendieta, told us that the pupils were "super passionate" about the lessons, and passed on some letters from the children themselves, who wrote to their headteacher after reading the article to ask for the school to switch from plastic to glass bottles.

"Every year we are wasting 39,000 plastic bottles and we wrote some letters so we can use glass bottles instead of plastic bottles and it worked, we've been using glass bottles for two weeks and that is a big improvement and now every class has glass bottles," wrote Sameeka.

"We are shocked," Maya added. "The

AROUND THE REGIONS

In **MANCHESTER**, a partnership has been established with the Methodist Church on Oldham Street, who will be acting as an agency to sell magazines to City Centre vendors from their café on Tuesday to Friday between 9:30am and 1pm. This means that vendors do not have to spend long periods of time away from their pitches to collect magazines.

In **LIVERPOOL**, the team have been working with a local homeless shelter, The Cotton Street Project.

People staying in the shelter have been supported to start selling Big Issue North, and three rough sleeping vendors have been referred to the shelter, where they have been provided with secure accommodation and access to the support and services offered by the hostel team.

In **LEEDS**, a vendor and staff were invited to attend the Royal College of Nursing's Pride in the NHS event in July.

They held a stall to promote the work of Big Issue North and its Trust and collected donations of tea, coffee and biscuits for vendors who access the Yorkshire offices. The RCN also held a raffle, with cash proceeds going to the Big Issue North Trust.

In **MANCHESTER**, we were visited by Vince Cable and his team, who travelled from London to see the life-changing impact of our work with vendors across the north of England.

Mr Cable and his team took the time to speak to our directors and staff in our Manchester office, before making their way to visit Justin, who sells the magazine in St Ann's Square.

creatures under the sea are fighting for their lives but they can't do it alone, you have to help them by reducing the amount of plastic you use!"

It looks like Year 2 at Unity are doing exactly that – well done, everyone!

If you work in a school and want to find out more about how we can help children learn about our vendors and the work we do, email us at fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com



MANCHESTER DAY CELEBRATIONS

In June, Manchester celebrated the tenth Manchester Day. Since 2010, the annual festival has provided an opportunity to celebrate the people and communities that make Manchester the uniquely warm, vibrant and spirited city that it is.

This year, four of our staff and four of our vendors took part in the parade, representing Big Issue North and the opportunities it provides to those in and around the city who want to build a better life.

One of those vendors was Colin, who sells Big Issue

North in Manchester. "Last year I was carrying the Big Issue North banner," he told us. "I was on the parade this year and as we went onto Deansgate, I heard someone shout 'Colin!' and I looked around and it was [Greater Manchester Mayor] Andy Burnham! I've done the Big Sell with him before. I also saw a few people I sell the Big Issue to who waved to me, and the manager of HOME cinema, where I sell in the evenings, saw me and he took a picture and put it on the website, and then he sent it to Big Issue North who put it in the magazine."

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 to support our vendors please fill in the form enclosed with the newsletter or call 0161 848 2420.



Text BINORTH to 70970 to give £5 or donate online at justgiving.com/bigissuenorth



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



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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
The Trustees of The Big Issue North Trust are: Fay Selvan • Edna Robinson • Mark Fitzgibbon • Safina Islam

The Big Issue in the North Trust is a Big Life charity (Registered Charity No. 1056041)
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