

FRIENDS OF BIG ISSUE NORTH

WINTER 2019

Brexit is an uncertain time for many of our vendors from the EU, who face additional financial and practical barriers to applying for citizenship or settled or pre-settled status. Our recent vendor audit revealed that a third of our vendors are homeless, while 37% do not have a birth certificate, 50% do not have a passport and 58% have no form of bank account. This can make it difficult for vendors to produce the necessary paperwork to prove the length of their residence in the UK, and the cost of applications is problematic for those who already struggle to afford the basics, such as rent, bills and food

Over the past few months, our staff have been working tirelessly to support the vendors facing these barriers by helping them to apply for ID and fill out paperwork and providing information, including hosting visits by organisations such as the Romanian Consulate in Manchester.

With the support of Stacey Pollard, who previously worked in the Big Issue North office in Leeds, one vendor, Eugenia, was able to collate the identification and paperwork she needed to apply for settled status, and sent her application off from the office. In September, we received news that she has been granted settled status, meaning that, regardless of the outcome of Brexit negotiations, she will be able to go to college to study to achieve her dream of becoming a nail technician. "I am so excited," Eugenia said. "I can't believe it!"

After an initial assessment, all Big Issue North vendors are invited to meetings with staff on at least a quarterly basis to discuss their aspirations and the support they need to achieve them. In our recent vendor audit, many

BIG ISSUE NORTH VENDOR NAILS HER AMBITIONS



vendors expressed uncertainty with regard to the training and qualifications that would be helpful or necessary in moving on from selling Big Issue North into alternative employment. In order to raise awareness of the options available to vendors, staff collect literature from local educational institutions in order to help them to explore their options.

Eugenia had expressed an interest in a career in beauty since selling Big Issue North, but, as a mother, she was concerned about how she could fit an education in around her childcare responsibilities, and was uncertain of the path she would need to take to achieve her goals. Stacey, armed with a prospectus from Leeds City College, was able to direct her to a range of courses which would allow her to specialise in nail art, and which would fit around her home life. We wish her every success as she prepares to embark on her new adventure.

Your generosity helps us to support vendors like Eugenia to access the education they need to change their lives.

To make a donation, text BINORTH to 70970 to give £5, call 0161 848 2420 to donate by credit or debit card or to set up a standing order, or visit www.justgiving.com/BigIssueNorth.

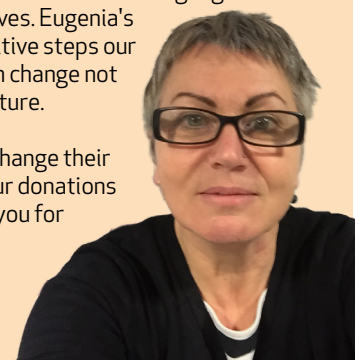
Letter from Fay

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter!

Stories like Eugenia's show the difference that selling Big Issue North can make to people's lives. Eugenia's 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



HSBC CALLED TO ACCOUNT

A former Big Issue North vendor was forced to have his wages paid into a friend's bank account after his was frozen due to suspected money laundering.

Gheorghe Ardeleanu, who sold the magazine in Liverpool city centre before finding work as a handyman, spent two months trying to persuade HSBC to unlock his account – opened under a scheme for homeless people.

Instead, the bank closed the account, telling him he could not use its services again. When Big Issue North contacted HSBC to ask why, the firm relented, unblocking Ardeleanu's account and giving him compensation.

The former vendor's ordeal began when he lost his accommodation and moved to a shelter run by the Whitechapel Centre. When staff realised he was carrying around £500 in cash – which he had saved doing agency work – they suggested opening a bank account.

HSBC's No Fixed Abode scheme allows homeless people to open a basic account even if they lack the ID documents banks normally require, by using the address of the agency supporting them. But Ardeleanu ran into problems and quickly found himself unable to withdraw anything more than small amounts of cash.

Lindsay Rimmer, senior coordinator of the Liverpool office of Big Issue North, said: "The last couple of months should be a real success story for Gheorghe because he's found a stable job, but it's been tainted by this.

"He's a real grafter and is used to paying bills so him having some money isn't that unusual. But when he went in to withdraw some money he was told the account was frozen.

"This went on for two months. He was going backwards and forwards trying to



sort it out, and I wrote letters and even went to the branch with him to try to solve the problem. It was really stressful for him and seems very unfair to me.

"Those in contact with homeless services are not all in the midst of a drug addiction. To be continually asked where the money is coming from, as if it's illegitimate for him to have any, didn't sit well with me."

After Big Issue North approached HSBC for a comment, however, the bank reinstated his account – also crediting it with £300 to compensate him for the inconvenience.

Ardeleanu said: "I'm so happy they have reactivated my account. I had to make a lot of visits to the bank and Lindsay also came with me to the branch twice. I should have been working – I'd just got a new job and didn't want to be seen as unreliable. But I was really worried about this and didn't have a bank card or access to my money, which was inconvenient. It also prevented me

from returning to Romania to replace my ID documents."

58% of our vendors have no form of bank account. This can make saving and managing money much more difficult, and also prevents our vendors from accepting cashless payments. For many vendors, opening a bank account is difficult, as they do not have the ID or permanent address required by many banking companies. The Big Issue North Trust works with vendors to help them to overcome these barriers.

Last year, we provided financial support to our vendors 213 times. Without your generosity, this would not be possible. To make a donation, please text BINORTH to 70970 to give £5, call 0161 848 2420 to donate by credit or debit card or to set up a standing order, or visit www.justgiving.com/BigIssueNorth

STEFAN'S PERSONAL BEST

Stefan, 58, who sells Big Issue North outside Piccadilly station in Manchester, is a prolific runner. In the past year, he's completed marathons in multiple countries, collecting a total of seven medals. Now he's gearing up for two runs in the new year to raise money for the Big Issue North Trust.

In January, Stefan will be taking to Bolton for the Mast 10k, before competing in the Manchester Marathon in April, where he hopes to beat his personal best of 3 hours and 32 minutes.

"When I was a boy, I didn't have power," he said. "At 23, when I finished my compulsory service in the army, I

had a big problem with my breathing and I was off sick for a year. I was very unhealthy. And when I was 35 years old, I had a big belly and I was over 90 kilos. I felt very old. After that I started to get better. I changed my nutrition. I stopped eating meat. I stopped drinking alcohol. And then, step by step, I began to renew. I learnt yoga and martial arts and I started running about 12 years ago. Now it is part of my life. It is what I do."

We all wish Stefan luck though, with his track record, he won't need it!



If you would like to sponsor Stefan and the work the Big Issue North Trust does, go to justgiving.com/fundraising/big-issue-north-trust to sponsor his Manchester Marathon run, or justgiving.com/fundraising/big-issue-north-trust-2 to sponsor his Mast 10k run.

INTRODUCING THE NEW ISSUE

The creators of Big Issue North magazine have launched a new publication, telling untold stories and created to change the lives of the most vulnerable people in our society.

The New Issue is a quarterly magazine, which contains real stories – beautifully told. It offers stunning photography combined with high-quality independent writing, covering everything from changing landscapes and social issues, to lifestyle and fiction. It's a long read; something to take time over and savour.

While The New Issue is sold directly to subscribing individuals and businesses, its ethos remains that of Big Issue North. All profits from sales of the new publication go back into support the people who sell Big Issue North on the streets, creating more opportunities for people facing barriers to employment, and facing homelessness or vulnerable living situations.

As well as its beautiful aesthetic, clear social purpose and broad editorial remit, the other thing that sets The New Issue apart is what isn't in it – advertising. It means the content of the magazine is truly independent. It's beholden to no one, but the peoples whose stories are told, and its readers.



The New Issue is for people who want to know more about the world around them, and who value the permanence and beauty that The New Issue offers in an increasingly transient world.

It's for organisations that have a customer base that value the kind of insightful content that we provide, bound up in an aspirational, coffee-table package. Equally, it's for organisations with a clear sense of social responsibility, who recognise their place in their communities, and the importance of taking every opportunity to do good and change lives.

The New Issue costs £40 for an annual subscription, and the first issue is out now. To subscribe to The New Issue, visit www.newissue.co.uk

WELCOME TO THE WORLD, ROMAN!



Earlier this month, Leventica, a 17-year-old vendor in Leeds, gave birth to her first baby – a boy named Roman.

"I live by myself," she told us. "I had to do this by myself – I have to be self-sufficient. My mum can't do anything

for me and my dad can't do anything for me, because I've grown up now, I have a baby, I have to do it all by myself. I have to learn how to do that.

"I decided to move out when I found out I was having a baby. It's hard, but my mum can't really help me because she's quite old now. She can help me with the baby by staying over and teaching me and things, but I think it's better to do it by myself. My mum's quite excited!"

Leventica has twelve nieces and nephews – each of her three older sisters has four children. A large family aren't on the cards for her, though: "I want two, a boy and a girl. That's it!"

Our vendors are self-employed, buying each magazine for us for £1.25 before selling it on for £2.50. While this offers busy parents flexibility to work around

AROUND THE REGIONS

In **MANCHESTER**, a multi-agency pilot scheme to reduce begging facilitated by Greater Manchester Police has been launched at The Arc. Every Wednesday afternoon, representatives from various organisations are on hand to offer those who have turned to begging the means to get their lives back on track. Big Issue North will be there each week, and gave trial badges to seven individuals during the first session, enabling each of those people to earn a legitimate income rather than beg in Manchester city centre.

In **LEEDS**, there has been a significant increase in referrals of vendors to the local baby bank, where vendors with young children are able to access the resources required to bring up a baby, such as nappies and formula. There has also been a substantial increase in requests for help with acquiring settled status or pre-settled status.

In **SHEFFIELD**, vendors have raised £30 for St Luke's Hospice, in memory of vendor Carol Corby's father, who received palliative care from their staff. Carol will be presenting the donation to staff at St Luke's, where she will also be able to learn more about the work that they do.

In **LIVERPOOL**, Street Paws have been offering free veterinary care and emergency kennel space to dogs whose owners are experiencing homelessness. A third of our vendors are currently homeless and many have canine friends, so this has been an enormous help, and the success of the scheme has resulted in it also being extended to our Manchester office.



their children's care needs, it also means that our new mums often cannot afford to take much time off to rest and spend time with their babies.

To help out new parents in this position, Big Issue North works closely with Leeds Baby Bank, which provides those struggling financially with everything from nappies to formula to cots and prams. We are proud to be part of a network that provides support to those in need across the North.

DO THEY KNOW IT'S CHRISTMAS?

For many of us, Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year. For some of our vendors, however, Christmas means cold weather, hunger and loneliness.

Although Christmas is the period when vendors sell more magazines than at any other time of year, it also provides some of their harshest working conditions. Around a third of our vendors are currently homeless, but many more are vulnerably housed, and heating can be an unaffordable luxury, offering

little respite after a long day at work.

Our recent vendor audit found that 16% of our vendors are not in contact with close family members. This is a particular issue for our male and British vendors – 41% of Britons and 26% of men who sell Big Issue North will be spending this Christmas without family. While you are tucking into your Christmas dinner, our vendors may also have to make do with something far less indulgent. 30% of our vendors have used a foodbank



or soup kitchen – a figure almost four times higher than the national average.

In January, vendors also see a significant drop in sales, making the start of their year particularly difficult. Setting goals for the New Year can also be difficult for our vendors due to the significant barriers they face – only 25% hold formal qualifications, including just 6% of women, and 55% have

no previous employment experience. On top of this, 37% of our vendors have no birth certificate and half have no passport, making applying for jobs and securing accommodation much more difficult.

The good news is, it doesn't have to be this way – and you can help! Last year, the Big Issue North Trust provided crisis support 1,521 times, financial support 213 times and health and wellbeing support 171 times, and supported 39 vendors into education, 11 into new employment and 5 into new accommodation, as well as assisting 127 vendors with housing issues. Every donation we receive helps us to provide this support, and to ensure that our vendors don't have to face the world alone.

Your generosity helps us to spread the Christmas spirit to our vendors. To make a donation, please text BINORTH to 70970 to give £5, call 0161 848 2420 to donate by credit or debit card or to set up a standing order, or visit www.justgiving.com/BigIssueNorth

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



It's really easy to raise funds for the Trust with EasyFundraising while shopping online. Just remember to set Big Issue North Trust as your chosen charity and start raising at no extra cost!

Go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk today!

GIVE OUR VENDORS THE GIFT OF HOPE THIS CHRISTMAS

While we greatly appreciate donations, there are many ways you can support our vendors this Christmas. Here are a few ideas if you'd like to send them a message of festive goodwill:

1. **Buy some of your gifts and cards from our shop.** Whether you're after jewellery, homeware, or excellent reading material, our shop has something for everyone, and our pun-based cards are sure to put a smile on the face of any wordplay lover. To browse the selection of goods on offer, go to shop.bigissuenorth.com/products.
2. **Send your loved ones a Big Issue North ecard.** If you're taking a more eco-friendly approach to well-wishing this Christmas, you can send a message of Christmas goodwill to our vendors too when you send your loved ones a Big Issue North ecard from dontsendmeacard.com/ecard/r9zt
3. **Select Big Issue North as your charity of choice on Amazon Smile.** Every time you make a purchase, we will receive 0.5% of the cost. Go to smile.amazon.co.uk and search for 'Big Issue North Trust'.
4. **Send our vendors a Christmas gift.** Many of the home comforts we take for granted, such as warm clothing, toiletries and furniture, are an unattainable luxury for our vendors. Our vendors' Christmas lists and details of how to give the items listed are online at bigissuenorth.com/vendors-christmas-list-2019 – anything you can give would be immensely appreciated.
5. **Buy a magazine or calendar from your local vendor.** For many of our vendors, selling Big Issue North is their only source of income. Vendors are now selling our 2020 calendar alongside the magazine, and every sale they make – as well as every chat they have – helps to make the cold months a little warmer for them.

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

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