Annual survey of The Big Issue in the North Vendors 2001

THE BIG ISSUE IN THE NORTH

THE BIG ISSUE IN THE NORTH TRUST

Contents

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1. Introduction

We carried out this survey, our fourth Annual Survey of vendors, in May 2001. Each year, The Big Issue in the North Trust conducts an annual survey of vendors in order to:

- **produce statistical information about vendors which can be compared to previous research;**
- **provide information to assist us to develop our policies so that we can provide informed, practical services for vendors;**
- **inform national debates on homelessness;**
- **collect information to support our strategy for attracting funding.**

This year's Annual Survey contains a lot of information that can be compared with previous years. We have also added new questions on the impact of selling The Big Issue in the North on vendors' lives. There is also more in-depth information on vendors' drug use.

Since the last Annual Survey was undertaken, we have introduced The Big Futures. This is a structured two-year programme which all vendors participate in. It includes compulsory training, monthly one-to-one meetings with staff and access to a wide range of services provided by The Big Issue in the North Trust to help vendors move on into good health, a good home, a good job and a good life.

The findings in this report are important not only for us but for national debates about how best to tackle homelessness.

2. Summary

2.1. Introduction

This section describes the key findings to emerge from this year's survey. More detail is contained in the chapters that follow.

The most important points in this year's survey are:

- vendors said that selling The Big Issue in the North helps them to move away from crime and drugs. 90% said they commit less crime. 41% use fewer drugs and 48% say their drug use has stayed the same (see Section 8);
- most vendors see a positive future for themselves and want to move on from The Big Issue in the North and do other things in life (see Section 9);
- Big Issue in the North vendors are mostly white men in their 20s and 30s (see Section 3);
- 29% were brought up in care (see Section 3);
- just under half were homeless before the age of 21 (see Section 4);
- a third have been homeless for over three years (see Section 4);
- 57% have a qualification (see Section 5);
- most vendors (84%) have had a formal, paid job other than selling The Big Issue in the North (see Section 5);
- just over 1 in 10 of vendors had spent the previous night sleeping rough but three-quarters had slept rough at some point in the last year (see Section 6);
- most rough-sleeping done by vendors is relatively short term (see Section 6);
- those selling the magazine away from the main cities of Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester were the most likely to have their own tenancy and the least likely to have problems with health, drugs and other areas of life (see Sections 6 and 7);
- vendors said they had problems in four main areas of life (drugs, accommodation, employment and finances). Drug users were the most likely to say that they experienced problems in life (see Section 7).

3. Who are our vendors?

3.1. Introduction

This section describes the main characteristics of our vendors, particularly in relation to gender, ethnicity, age and length of homelessness.

3.2. How many vendors are there?

In planning the survey, it was vital to have a proper understanding of the total number of current The Big Issue in the North vendors (see section 11). In the first week of May 2001, we undertook a count of the number of vendors who bought a copy of the magazine from each of our offices. Table 3.1 shows that, at this time, there were 356 vendors. This figure will change from week to week but represents the situation in May 2001.

Table 3.1. Total number of The Big Issue in the North vendors, May 2001.

	Number of vendors	
Leeds	137	
Liverpool	89	
Manchester	130	
TOTAL	365	−356.

This is very similar to the figure from previous years. Not all these vendors actually sell The Big Issue in the North in these cities so it is not true to say, for example, that there are 89 vendors selling in the city of Liverpool. Vendors are recorded at the office from which they buy their magazines. The magazine is sold on the streets of over 120 towns and cities across the North West, Yorkshire and Humberside.

Prior to this survey, the last time that all vendors had to apply for a new badge in order to continue selling the magazine was in March 2000. Over the subsequent 12 months, 1,245 vendors sold the magazine (Leeds 431, Liverpool 245, Manchester 569).

3.3. Gender

The vast majority of vendors are male as Table 3.2 shows and the proportion of female vendors has fallen slightly over the last year.

Table 3.2. Gender by office.

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total	2000 Total
Female	8%	4%	10%	7%	12%
Male	93%	96%	90%	93%	88%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=112	n=72	n=93	n=277	n=362

3.4. Ethnicity

Most Big Issue in the North vendors describe themselves as "White". In Liverpool, there is a group who describe themselves as "Irish". There has been little change in this respect over the past year.

Table 3.3. Ethnicity by office.

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total	2000 Total
White	96%	88%	89%	91%	90%
Irish	-	9%	1%	3%	5%
Black other	-	1%	-	-	1%
Other	5%	3%	10%	6%	5%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=112	n=72	n=92	n=276	n=362

3.5. Age

Around three-quarters of vendors are aged between 21 – 35. The age profile of vendors has been relatively stable over recent years. The average age is 31, as was the case last year.

The differences between the cities are relatively minor, but Leeds has a slightly younger age profile with 26% of vendors there aged under 26.

Table 3.4. Age of vendors, by office.

Age	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total	2000 Total
16-20	5%	7%	3%	5%	7%
21-25	21%	11%	12%	15%	19%
26-30	27%	34%	33%	31%	29%
31-35	21%	25%	30%	26%	24%
36-40	17%	18%	12%	16%	13%
41-45	7%	-	4%	4%	4%
46-50	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%
Over 50	-	3%	4%	2%	2%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=111	n=72	n=93	n=276	n=362

3.6. Local authority care

The proportion of vendors who had spent time in care as a child was 29%. In the last two surveys the figure has been very similar, 27%.

In previous years, Manchester has had a higher proportion of vendors who had been in care but this is not apparent this year (Leeds 29%, Liverpool 28%, Manchester 30%).

Previous annual surveys have all shown an association between spending time in care as a child and problems later on in life. This is not apparent to the same degree in this year's results. However, there were some areas where vendors brought up in care were more likely to experience disadvantage.

Vendors who had been in care were more likely to have slept rough in the last year (81% compared to 72% of other vendors). They were more likely to become homeless at a younger age (61% became homeless before they were 21 compared to 40% of other vendors). They were also less likely to have had a job other than selling The Big Issue in the North (77% compared to 86% of other vendors).

Section 7 contains more information on the problems that vendors face.

4. Becoming homeless

4.1. Introduction

People become homeless for many different reasons. This section describes, in broad terms, how and at what age of vendors first became homeless.

4.2. Age at which vendors first became homeless

The majority of our vendors became homeless at an early age. By the time that they were 25, nearly two-thirds were already homeless. Just under half were homeless before the age of 21. In last year's survey, fewer vendors reported becoming homeless at such an early age. However, this year's figures are very similar to those in earlier surveys.

Previous surveys have shown Liverpool vendors becoming homeless at a slightly older age than those in the other cities and this year's figures are no different.

Table 4.1. Age when vendors first became homeless, by office.

Age	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total	2000 Total
Under 16	13%	9%	16%	13%	9%
16-20	36%	31%	32%	33%	25%
21-25	20%	21%	12%	18%	24%
26-30	18%	19%	20%	19%	19%
31-35	8%	12%	11%	10%	14%
36-40	3%	4%	5%	4%	5%
41-45	2%	3%	1%	2%	3%
46-50	-	-	1%	-	1%
Over 50	-	3%	1%	1%	1%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=118	n=78	n=98	n=294	n=362

4.3. How vendors became homeless

Vendors were asked to describe in broad terms how they became homeless. They were asked to describe the event or process of them losing their last home rather than describing the underlying reason for this.

As was the case last year, two reasons stood out in particular: moving away from the parental home because of problems and splitting up with a partner. A higher proportion this year than last said they had left parents' home due to problems.

The only other response given by more than 10% of vendors was "kicked out by family" in Leeds.

Table 4.2. How vendors became homeless, by office.

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total	2000 Total
Left parents' home due to problems					
	31%	25%	35%	31%	24%
Split up with partner					
	24%	29%	30%	27%	27%
Evicted	9%	6%	5%	7%	11%
Kicked out by family					
	15%	4%	5%	9%	9%
Left prison	3%	6%	6%	5%	9%
Harassment	4%	8%	4%	5%	-
Left care	6%	5%	4%	5%	3%
Went travellin	3%	-	6%	3%	3%
Other	4%	17%	4%	7%	10%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=118	n=79	n=99	n=296	n=362

4.4. Length of homelessness

Vendors were asked how long they had been homeless or experienced unsettled housing. 33% have been homeless for over three years. In recent years, it seems that vendors have been less likely to have been very long-term homeless. This is the lowest figure that has been recorded in these surveys and in 1996 and 1997 the figure was 50%. Last year, 39% had been homeless for more than three years.

Leeds vendors were more likely to have been homeless for over five years (over a quarter). In past surveys, Manchester vendors were more likely to have been long-term homeless.

Table 4.3. Length of homelessness, by office.

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total	2000 Total
<3 months	-	7%	6%	4%	7%
3-6 months	8%	7%	9%	8%	11%
6-12 months	21%	18%	16%	20%	11%
1-2 years	13%	30%	16%	18%	16%
2-3 years	21%	13%	17%	18%	16%
3-5 years	9%	13%	16%	12%	15%
5-10 years	18%	5%	9%	12%	13%
10+ years	10%	8%	10%	9%	11%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=105	n=63	n=87	n=255	n=362

5. Vendors' education and employment history

5.1. Introduction

This section describes the proportion of vendors who have educational qualifications and at what level. It also illustrates the jobs that vendors have done in the past, how long it is since they were in employment and the jobs that they hope to move into in the future.

5.2. Educational qualifications

This is the first year that we have collected information about the proportion of vendors who have an educational qualification. 57% have a qualification but there are considerable differences between the three cities in this respect. Leeds vendors (66%) are much more likely to have a qualification while Liverpool (45%) vendors were the least likely. The figure in Manchester was the same as the average.

As Table 5.1 shows, there are considerable differences between the vendors and the general population of working age in England in terms of highest qualification held. Vendors were three times more likely to have no qualification. Almost a quarter of the working age population has a Level 4 qualification compared to just 4% of vendors.

Table 5.1. Level of vendors' highest educational qualification.

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total	England
No qualification	34%	55%	43%	43%	15%
Level 1	33%	24%	35%	31%	20%
Level 2	21%	8%	14%	15%	22%
Level 3	8%	6%	8%	7%	19%
Level 4	4%	8%	-	4%	24%
TOTAL	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
		n=120	n=80	n=102	n=302

Note: Level 4 is a degree level or professional qualification; Level 3 is an A-level, advanced GNVQ or NVQ level 3; Level 2 is five or more GCSEs, intermediate GNVQ or NVQ level 2; Level 1 are other qualifications such as GCSEs, NVQ level 1 or foundation GNVQ.

Statistics for England refer to adults of working age and are taken from "The level of highest qualification held by young people and adults: England 2000" DfEE, February 2001.

5.3. Time since vendors had a job

Most vendors (84%) have had a formal, paid job other than selling The Big Issue in the North magazine. This is slightly higher than last year's figure (79%). There is, however a striking difference between the cities.

In Liverpool, 64% have had a paid job compared to 90% in Leeds and 91% in Manchester. Liverpool also had the lowest rate last year.

Table 5.2. also shows that those Liverpool vendors who have worked are more likely to be very long term (over 10 years) unemployed than vendors in other cities. Overall, a third of vendors have not worked in the last five years and over half have not worked in the last three years. The figures are similar to those in last year's survey although then there were a slightly higher proportion of vendors who had been unemployed for over 10 years.

Table 5.2. Time since vendors had a formal, paid job.

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total	2000 Total
<6 months	6%	6%	8%	6%	7%
6-12 months	11%	16%	10%	12%	8%
1-2 years	13%	6%	9%	10%	15%
2-3 years	18%	20%	16%	18%	14%
3-5 years	18%	24%	26%	22%	17%
5-10 years	25%	10%	24%	22%	23%
10+years	10%	18%	9%	11%	17%
TOTAL	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
	n=107	n=50	n=93	n=250	n=283

Note: figures refer to those vendors who have had a formal paid job.

5.4. Types of jobs vendors have worked in

We asked those vendors who had worked in a formal, paid job in the past to describe the last job they had done. The results show that most vendors last worked in manual types of occupation, often unskilled.

Table 5.3. shows that around a third last worked in jobs classified as "Other Occupations". These are largely unskilled manual jobs. The other types of jobs that were described frequently were "Craft & Related Occupations" (for example, skilled jobs in construction or engineering) and "Personal & Protective Service" (for example, jobs in catering or as security guards).

Liverpool had a relatively high proportion whose last job was "Managerial". These were largely vendors who had run their own small business. Liverpool also had a relatively low proportion of vendors who had last worked in "Other Occupations".

These results are markedly different from those last year when 40% of vendors said their last job was in "Craft & Related Occupations". This figure is much lower this year and a proportion who worked in unskilled "Other Occupations" is much higher.

Table 5.3. Vendors' last job, by Standard Occupational Classification (SOC).

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total	2000 Total
Managerial	4%	9%	1%	4%	1%
Professional	2%	-	-	1%	1%
Associate Professional & Technical	2%	2%	3%	2%	4%
Clerical	5%	-	6%	4%	5%
Craft & Related	18%	21%	15%	18%	40%
Personal & Protective Service	15%	21%	15%	16%	21%
Sales	12%	6%	10%	10%	3%
Plants & Machine Operative	10%	17%	11%	12%	5%
Other	34%	23%	39%	34%	20%
TOTAL	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
	n=108	n=47	n=91	n=246	n=283

Note: figures refer to those vendors who have had a formal paid job.

5.5. The jobs that vendors want to do after leaving The Big Issue in the North

Vendors are able to sell The Big Issue in the North magazine for a maximum of two years. We asked vendors what sort of job they want to do when they stop selling the magazine. Table 5.4. shows that around a quarter said that they did not know what sort of job they want to move into. The sort of occupations that vendors mentioned were often those in which they had worked in the past so "Craft & Related Occupations" and "Other Occupations" were named relatively frequently. However, "Associate Professional & Technical" was one of the categories most frequently referred to, often by vendors wishing to work in IT or engineering.

There were some differences between the cities. Leeds vendors were the most likely to say they wanted to work in unskilled, manual occupations ("Other Occupations") and the least likely to say that they didn't know what job they wanted to do when they finished selling The Big Issue in the North.

Table 5.4. The jobs vendors want to do after leaving The Big Issue in the North, by Standard Occupational Classification (SOC).

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total
Managerial	2%	5%	4%	3%
Professional	3%	1%	4%	3%
Associate Professional & Technical	13%	11%	18%	14%
Clerical	5%	4%	5%	5%
Craft & Related	15%	18%	14%	15%
Personal & Protective Service	8%	14%	4%	8%
Sales	6%	5%	6%	6%
Plants & Machine Operative	8%	4%	5%	6%
Other	18%	9%	8%	12%
Back to education	1%	-	4%	2%
Don't know	22%	30%	29%	26%
TOTAL	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
	n=110	n=80	n=102	n=302

We also asked vendors what sort of training they believed they would need in order to move into their chosen occupation. Table 5.5. shows that a high proportion of vendors do not believe that they need any training. Many respondents expressed a desire to go back into the sort of work that they had done previously.

Relatively few vendors believed that they needed to improve their basic skills (literacy and numeracy) in order to move into employment. However, the experience of our Vendor Development Tutors is that a high proportion of vendors have relatively poor basic skills.

It may be that some vendors felt uncomfortable admitting in a short face-to-face interview that they have basic skills needs, leading to the sort of figures shown in Table 5.5.

Vendors were most likely to say that they required vocational training specifically tailored to the occupation of their choice.

Table 5.5. Training that vendors believe they need to move into their chosen occupation.

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total
None	33%	41%	42%	39%
Specific vocational training	40%	29%	33%	35%
Driving (including HGV, forklift)	18%	14%	13%	15%
IT	15%	5%	13%	12%
Sales or marketing	11%	2%	6%	7%
Business planning	9%	5%	6%	7%
Basic literacy	7%	2%	8%	6%
Basic numeracy	4%	4%	6%	5%
Finance or accountancy	4%	2%	6%	4%
	n=94	n=56	n=72	n=222

Note: figures refer to those vendors who stated an occupation they wished to move into. Figures in each column may add up to more than 100% as respondents could give more than one answer.

6. Vendors' housing situation

6.1. Introduction

Homelessness does not always mean that someone is sleeping on the streets and by no means are all vendors rough sleepers (by sleeping rough we mean sleeping on the streets, in car parks, in cars or in other unconventional settings).

Those who do have accommodation are mostly in temporary or unstable accommodation, although some vendors do have their own tenancies having been homeless when they first started to sell The Big Issue in the North.

Vendors who move into their own accommodation are allowed to complete the 2 year Big Futures programme. Helping vendors to move into a good home and sustain this in the longer term is one of our aims.

This section examines vendors' housing in more depth.

6.2. Current accommodation

We asked vendors to describe the type of accommodation they had slept in the previous night. Three types of accommodation were mentioned particularly frequently: staying with friends or family, hostels and vendors' own tenancy. Just over 1 in 10 of vendors had spent the previous night sleeping rough (sleeping rough includes sleeping on the streets as well as in car parks, cars or other settings not designed for sleeping).

It was apparent that most vendors who were staying with family or friends did not see this as a long-term solution. Two-thirds of them said that they had problems of accommodation. Only rough sleepers and squatters were more likely to say that they had accommodation problems. The dissatisfaction with staying with family and friends has also been evident in previous annual surveys.

Vendors' accommodation is broadly similar to last year although fewer were staying in a hostel in this survey.

There were some differences between the cities. Leeds vendors were less likely to be sleeping rough or staying in a hostel and were more likely to have their own home than vendors in other cities. Liverpool vendors were most likely to have slept rough and a relatively high proportion were in a hostel. Liverpool vendors were the least likely to have their own tenancy.

Figures for Manchester were close to the average in most respects.

The results also show clear differences between the vendors selling out of town and those selling in the city centres of Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester. The magazine is sold from designated pitches across the North of England. Vendors can keep a pitch for themselves if they sell from it on a regular basis. Alternatively they can sell as a "floater" and use whichever pitches are vacant on a particular day. Our experience is that vendors who sell the magazine away from the city centres of Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester tend to have fewer problems (see also section 7.3).

Just 4% of out of town vendors slept rough the previous night compared to 27% of those with a city centre pitch. 31% of out of town vendors have their own tenancy compared to 22% of those who sell from a city centre pitch and 14% of those with a city centre floater's badge.

As was the case last year, those vendors who have been selling for between 1 – 2 years were most likely to have their own tenancy and least likely to sleep rough.

Table 6.1. Last night's accommodation by office.

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total	2000 Total
Sleeping rough	9%	18%	15%	13%	14%
Squatting	2%	1%	4%	3%	4%
Bed & Breakfast	2%	6%	8%	5%	4%
Hostel	18%	32%	24%	24%	31%
With friends or family	30%	18%	25%	25%	21%
Own home	28%	17%	23%	23%	21%
Other	11%	8%	2%	6%	4%
TOTAL	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
	n=116	n=78	n=102	n=296	n=362

6.3. Rough sleeping in the last 12 months

Vendors were asked whether they had slept rough during the last 12 months. The majority of vendors, even if they are not currently sleeping rough, do so from time to time.

It should be stressed that vendors did not necessarily sleep rough in the Leeds, Liverpool or Manchester areas so their comments do not always refer to the situation or services in those cities.

Overall, 75% of vendors had slept rough in the last 12 months. This figure has been relatively constant for a number of years now. Liverpool vendors were the most likely to have slept rough (80%) compared to Manchester (76%) and Leeds (70%).

In last year's survey there was a clear relationship between the length of time as a vendor and the likelihood of having slept rough in the previous year. This was also apparent this year but to a lesser extent. This year, vendors who have been selling for over three years were much more likely to have slept rough.

Vendors selling out of town were much less likely to have slept rough in the previous 12 months. 65% of them had done so compared to 83% of the city centre vendors.

Table 6.2. Proportion of vendors who have slept rough in the last 12 months, by length of time as a vendor.

Length of time as a vendor	% who slept rough 2000 figure	in last 12 months
New vendor	74%	87%
<6 months	86%	83%
6-12 months	87%	74%
1-2 years	60%	70%
2-3 years	55%	65%
Over three years	70%	49%
All vendors	75%	75%
	n=302	n=362

Those vendors who had slept rough in the previous 12 months were asked how long they had spent on the streets of the last time they slept rough. Table 6.3. shows that most rough sleeping by vendors is relatively short term.

Table 6.3. Number of consecutive nights vendors' spent sleeping rough the last time they did so.

Nights	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total	2000 Total
1	9%	5%	4%	6%	13%
2-7	41%	37%	41%	40%	38%
1-2 wks	13%	21%	13%	15%	11%
2-4 wks	9%	10%	7%	9%	7%
1-2 mths	13%	10%	12%	12%	9%
2-6 mths	12%	13%	12%	12%	9%
6-12 mths	1%	3%	7%	4%	5%
1-2 yrs	1%	-	4%	2%	3%
2-5 yrs	-	2%	1%	1%	3%
Over 5 yrs	1%	-	-	-	1%
TOTAL	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
	n=86	n=62	n=76	n=224	n=278

Note: figures refer to vendors who had slept rough in the previous 12 months.

Just under half of those who slept rough spent less than a week on the streets the last time they did so. 70% were on the streets for less than four weeks. Only 3% spent more than a year sleeping rough.

These findings are very similar to those from last year's survey. Based on this information over two years, it seems that very few Big Issue in the North vendors are long-term rough sleepers. Anecdotally, our experience of working with vendors is that they move in and out of rough sleeping, hostels and other forms of temporary accommodation on a regular basis. They will often experience several spells of rough sleeping during the course of a year. This would seem to suggest that there is only a small group of vendors who might be termed "rough sleepers" who are distinct from people living in other forms of temporary or insecure accommodation. This has implications for both national and local policy which, based on these results, should not consider rough sleepers as a group distinct from other homeless people.

Vendors who had slept rough were asked whether they had attempted to find some form of temporary accommodation. Overall, 69% said that they had.

This figure was much higher among Liverpool vendors (81%) than those in Leeds (63%) and Manchester (65%).

Vendors who had slept rough were also asked what were the reasons they had done so rather than having got a place in a hostel or night shelter. Table 6.4. shows that by far the most frequent reason was that hostels were full.

The other reason that was given most frequently was that hostels are unattractive places to stay.

The problem of no hostel places was mentioned most frequently by Liverpool vendors. Leeds vendors were the most unlikely to have said that they found hostels to be unattractive places to stay.

Although these two reasons were the most frequently given last year, the proportion who said there were no free hostel places has increased significantly over the past year. It should be emphasised again that vendors were not necessarily referring to the situation in Leeds, Liverpool or Manchester. Also, they may have perceived hostels to be full or had been told that by others rather than it actually being the case.

As in last year's survey, only a tiny proportion of vendors said that they actually preferred to sleep rough.

Table 6.4. The reasons why vendors who slept rough did not stay in temporary accommodation the last time they slept rough.

Reason	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total	2000 Total
Hostels were full					
	43%	55%	30%	42%	25%
Hostels are unattractive					
	11%	18%	20%	16%	22%
Didn't know how or where to find one					
	8%	6%	5%	7%	12%
Banned from hostels					
	10%	11%	4%	8%	12%
Hostels don't allow pets					
	5%	2%	4%	4%	4%
Age restrictions					
	-	-	7%	2%	-
Hostels don't allow couples					
	5%	2%	1%	3%	-
Like to sleep rough					
	2%	-	1%	1%	2%
No ID	-	2%	11%	4%	1%
Other	14%	6%	9%	11%	15%
	n=86	n=62	n=76	n=224	n=278

7. Problems facing vendors

7.1. Introduction

This section examines in more detail the problems that vendors face and provides information about the number of vendors who perceive themselves to have a disability or long-term illness.

7.2. Disability and long-term illness

The proportion of vendors who described themselves as having a disability or long-term illness fell significantly from last year. This year the figure is 31% compared to 44% in 2000 and 39% in 1999. This compares to a figure of just 6% for the general population of the same age group (1991 Census, 16 – 54-year-olds).

Female vendors were slightly more likely to say they had a disability than male vendors (40% compared to 32%).

Previous surveys have shown an association between spending time in care as a child and having a disability but this was not apparent this year.

Leeds vendors were much less likely to say they had a disability than vendors in other cities. The figure there was 23% compared to 38% in Liverpool and 35% in Manchester.

There was a clear relationship between disability and age. Of those aged 25 and under, 9% said they had a disability. Among those aged 26 – 35 the figure was 35% and for those aged over 35, 48%.

Disability is not the same as poor health (see section 7.3 for information on vendors' physical and mental health) but, nevertheless, those vendors with a disability were more likely to say that they experience health problems. 41% said they had a physical health problem (compared to 33% of other vendors). 28% said they had mental health problems (compared to 23% of other vendors).

7.3. Problems in life

Vendors were asked whether they were currently experiencing problems in a range of areas. It is important to bear in mind that these were vendors' own perceptions. There are a whole range of reasons why people may not say they, for example, have a problem with their mental health. These could include an unwillingness to admit to a problem or a lack of awareness of their mental health.

As in previous years, the most problematic areas of life for vendors are:

- drugs;
- accommodation;
- employment;
- finances.

These were the major problems in life for vendors in each of the three cities, although a relatively high proportion of vendors in Leeds mentioned problems with their physical and mental health. Leeds also had the highest proportion who said drugs were a problem for them and this may have been a factor in their poor health.

This was the first year in which Liverpool vendors have not been the most likely to mention drugs as a problem. Previous surveys have highlighted the growing frequency of drugs problems in Leeds and this year vendors in that city were the most likely to say they had a problem with drugs. In 1997, in Leeds, just 37% said they had a drug or alcohol problem. More detailed information on drug use is contained in section 7.5.

Liverpool vendors were much less likely to mention alcohol, education or training, physical health and mental health as problems than the vendors in other cities. The proportion of vendors who mentioned drug use as a problem fell in Liverpool from 72% last year to 59% this year.

Drugs problems were least prevalent in Manchester, which was also the case last year.

Male vendors were more likely to say that they had employment problems (53% compared to 30% of women) and drug problems (63% compared to 45% of women). Female vendors were more likely to say they suffered from mental health problems (35% compared to 24% of men). In other respects there were no significant differences.

Table 7.1. Vendors' problems by office.

Problem	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total	2000 Total
Accommodation	47%	60%	59%	54%	59%
Drugs	69%	59%	52%	61%	57%
Alcohol	20%	5%	21%	16%	17%
Employment	58%	49%	49%	53%	51%
Financial	55%	58%	49%	53%	58%
Education or training					
	32%	16%	27%	26%	25%
Offending	6%	11%	6%	7%	8%
Physical health					
	43%	25%	34%	35%	30%
Mental health	31%	14%	25%	25%	27%
	n=120	n=80	n=102	n=302	n=362

Last year's survey was the first where we identified where the vendors sold the magazine. It showed that out of town vendors were less likely to experience a range of problems in their life. This year, Table 7.2 shows exactly the same pattern. In some cases, the differences were very significant (in particular, accommodation and financial problems).

Selling the magazine in out-of-town locations requires a higher degree of organisation and planning since the vendors have to budget in order to meet their travelling expenses and also to buy magazines in bulk. This helps them avoid having to visit the office frequently in order to buy magazines.

It is perhaps not surprising that this group of vendors have fewer problems in life.

Section 6 showed that out of town vendors are less likely to sleep rough and to have their own tenancy which is another indicator of their relative stability. Section 7.5 also illustrates how out of town vendors are less likely to be drug users.

Table 7.2. Vendors' problems by where they sell.

Problem	City centre	Out of town
Accommodation	60%	47%
Drugs	65%	56%
Alcohol	15%	18%
Employment	54%	50%
Financial	62%	43%
Education or training	29%	23%
Offending	9%	6%
Physical health	37%	32%
Mental health	25%	23%
	n=164	n=137

It is evident that those vendors who were drug users were much more likely to say that they experienced problems in life. It is striking that 90% of drug users felt that they had a problem with their drug use. The figures in Table 7.3 are a vivid demonstration of the links between drug use and problems in other areas of life. They highlight the significance of tackling drug use amongst vendors. Section 7.5 describes drug use amongst vendors in detail.

Table 7.3. Problems in life by drug use.

Problem	Drug users	Non drug users
Accommodation	60%	45%
Drugs	90%	8%
Alcohol	18%	13%
Employment	57%	46%
Financial	60%	42%
Education or training	31%	18%
Offending	9%	4%
Physical health	45%	18%
Mental health	32%	12%
	n=159	n=143

7.4. Problems in life and length of time as a vendor

Table 7.4 looks at the association between length of time as a vendor and the likelihood of having problems in various areas of life. It should be stressed that vendors were asked whether they themselves felt they had a problem so the figures refer to vendors' own perceptions. These can change over time, particularly as an individual's expectations change. For example, a rough sleeper is likely to say that their accommodation is a problem. If they move into a hostel they may well be very pleased with the move and not see their accommodation as a problem at that point in time.

However, if they remain in a hostel for a significant period of time they may become dissatisfied and, once again, begin to consider accommodation as a problem for them. So the figures in the table should be interpreted with this in mind.

Last year's survey showed that being a vendor has a positive impact on accommodation, finances and offending. The results this year show a similar pattern. As was reported last year, these areas of life are directly related to the income that vendors derived from selling the magazine. They are less like to revert to crime if they are earning a wage. Through their income and also through Big Issue in the North Trust services at each of our offices, they are more likely to be able to find suitable accommodation.

In addition, this year those vendors who had been selling for more than two years were the least likely to say that drugs were a problem for them.

The only area of life where longer term vendors were more likely to say they had a problem is physical health. This may be a genuine deterioration, perhaps linked to spending large amounts of time on the streets selling the magazine, or it may reflect an increase in expectations.

Table 7.4. Problems in life by length of time as a vendor.

Problem with ...	Length of time as a vendor			
	<6 mths	6-12 mths	1-2 yrs	>2 yrs
Accommodation	63%	53%	47%	43%
Drugs	62%	65%	67%	51%
Alcohol	14%	16%	7%	23%
Employment	57%	44%	55%	45%
Financial	58%	53%	55%	41%
Education or training	25%	18%	31%	27%
Offending	10%	4%	2%	9%
Physical health	27%	35%	40%	40%
Mental health	25%	26%	22%	22%
	n=112	n=57	n=55	n=88

Note: the figures refer to the proportion of vendors within each time band.

7.5. Drug use

In this year's survey we asked vendors a series of detailed questions about their drug use and use of drug treatment services. These questions give us important up-to-date information that was last gathered in our "Health Matters" study published in 1998.

As described in section 7.3. 61% of vendors said that they had a problem with their drug use. Of this group, 72% said that their drug use became problematic before they became homeless. Last year the figure was 81%.

These findings seem to indicate that, for the majority of vendors, drug problems come before homelessness. There were only very small differences between the three cities in this respect.

We asked all vendors which drugs they had used in the previous four weeks in order to build up a detailed picture of vendors' drug use. We did not limit this question to those vendors who felt they had a drug problem since some vendors may use illegal drugs but not perceive themselves to have a problem.

Overall, 73% of vendors had used one of the drugs listed in the table below in the previous four weeks. However, some of the drugs in the table are not illegal since they have been prescribed by a GP. 64% of vendors had used an illegal drug in the previous four weeks (not including the relatively less harmful cannabis). This figure is very similar to other research we have conducted. In 1997, in our "Health Matters" study, 70% of vendors used illegal drugs that were not prescribed to them.

Table 7.1 showed how Leeds vendors were the most likely to say that they had a drug problem. Perhaps unsurprisingly, vendors in Leeds were more likely to have used an illegal drug in the previous four weeks (73%). In Liverpool, the figure was 60% and in Manchester, 56%.

Younger vendors were more likely to say they had used an illegal drug in the previous four weeks. 69% of those aged 35 or under were illegal drug users compared to 50% of those aged over 35. There was no significant difference between men and women in this respect.

Vendors selling in the city centres of Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester were more likely to have used an illegal drug. 71% of them had done so compared with 56% of those who sold in out of town locations.

Table 7.5. Drugs used by vendors in the previous four weeks.

Drug	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total
Heroin	73%	58%	50%	61%
Crack cocaine	38%	43%	32%	37%
Cannabis	28%	28%	39%	32%
Benzodiazepines (not prescribed)	27%	13%	23%	22%
Prescribed methadone	10%	14%	22%	15%
Prescribed benzodiazepines	18%	3%	13%	12%
Cocaine powder	4%	5%	8%	6%
Methadone (not prescribed)	4%	6%	6%	5%
Qat	6%	-	8%	5%
Amphetamines	2%	1%	5%	3%
	n=120	n=80	n=102	n=302

The table above shows that drug use amongst vendors is dominated by three drugs: heroin, and to a lesser extent, crack cocaine and cannabis. In addition, just under a quarter of vendors had used benzodiazepines that were not prescribed to them. In our "Health Matters" study published in 1998, 53% of vendors reported using heroin and 28% used crack cocaine. Therefore, there appears to have been a small increase in the proportion of vendors who use these drugs over the last four years (the fieldwork for this study was conducted in 1997).

A much higher proportion of Leeds vendors had used heroin in the previous four weeks than vendors in the other cities. A relatively low proportion of vendors in Leeds were receiving a methadone prescription despite the high levels of heroin use in the city.

Historically, drug use amongst the Liverpool vendors has been particularly problematic but the proportion of vendors who had used heroin in the previous four weeks is now much lower than in Leeds. However, the use of crack cocaine is relatively high among vendors in Liverpool. The use of benzodiazepines (both prescribed and bought on the streets) is relatively low in Liverpool compared to the other cities.

Manchester has the lowest proportion of heroin-using vendors and the highest proportion who are on a methadone prescription.

Polydrug use was the norm in all three cities but particularly common in Manchester as the table below shows.

Table 7.6. Number of different drugs used in the previous four weeks.

Number of drugs	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total
1	23%	17%	7%	17%
2	22%	40%	18%	25%
3	16%	19%	30%	21%
4	27%	13%	25%	23%
5	9%	10%	9%	9%
More than 5	3%	2%	12%	6%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=88	n=48	n=57	n=193

Of those vendors who had used an illegal drug in the previous four weeks, 73% said that they had injected. This means that, overall, 50% of all vendors had injected a drug in the previous four weeks.

The findings on vendors' injecting behaviour showed a particular problem in Leeds, especially in terms of the injection of heroin. In Liverpool, crack was much more likely to be injected than in the other two cities. In Leeds, 87% of vendors who had used an illegal drug in the previous four weeks had injected compared to 79% in Liverpool and 69% in Manchester.

Table 7.7. Drugs injected by vendors in the previous four weeks.

Drug	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total
Heroin	64%	45%	38%	50%
Crack cocaine	13%	25%	13%	16%
	n=120	n=80	n=102	n=302

Note: figures indicate the proportion of all vendors who had injected each drug in the previous four weeks. Only drugs injected by more than 5% of the vendors are included here.

We asked vendors what was their primary drug. This means the drug that affects their life the most or causes them most harm. Heroin stood out but crack was important in both Liverpool and Manchester. In fact, several Liverpool vendors named both heroin and crack.

Overall, 79% of those who had used an illegal drug (not including cannabis) said heroin was their primary drug (83% in Leeds, 85% in Liverpool but only 68% in Manchester). 15% said crack cocaine (29% in Liverpool, 21% in Manchester but only 3% in Leeds).

Just over half of those using illegal drugs (57%) said that they were seeing drug treatment services at the time of the survey (a quarter of this group said that they were only seeing a needle exchange). This means that 43% of vendors using illegal drugs were not in any contact with any kind of drug treatment services.

Those who were seeing a needle exchange or no services at all were asked whether they thought they needed to see somebody. Three-quarters said that they did.

To sum up this information, 45% of all those who had used an illegal drug in the past four weeks said they wanted to see somebody about their drug use but were not doing so.

Some vendors who had not used an illegal drug in the previous four weeks were seeing drug treatment services (28% of the non drug using group).

We asked vendors how selling the magazine had affected their drug use. The results from these questions are described in section 8.

7.6. Health services

76% of vendors are registered with a GP (the figure for the general population is 97%). Our "Health Matters" study in 1998 found that 71% were registered so, overall, there has only been a very small increase in the subsequent four years.

However, those vendors who have been selling the magazine for more than six months were much more likely to be registered with a GP. Of those who had been selling for less than six months, only 63% were registered compared to 84% of those selling for longer than this.

Table 7.8. The proportion of vendors registered with a GP.

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total
Registered	74%	76%	79%	76%
Not registered	26%	24%	21%	24%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=115	n=78	n=102	n=295

Overall, 26% of vendors said they were seeing somebody, such as a GP, a hospital, a counsellor or other health worker, about their mental or physical health. As is clear from Table 7.1., this figure is lower than the proportion of vendors who said they had a problem with their physical or mental health which implies that some vendors feel that they require health services but are not receiving them.

Those vendors who were not seeing somebody about their health were asked whether they thought they needed to see somebody. 37% said that they thought they did (overall, this means that 27% of all vendors felt that they needed, but were not experiencing, contact with health services). Liverpool vendors were less likely to say that they needed health services (26%) compared to Leeds (42%) and Manchester (39%). This may be a difference in perception rather than genuine need between the cities.

7.7. Financial services

Our recent report "Out of Pocket" showed that 29% of vendors had an account with either a bank, building society or credit union where they could deposit money. This report also highlighted the difficulties that many homeless people face in opening bank accounts because they often lack conventional forms of ID such as a passport, driving licence or utility bill. This causes real problems for vendors since it makes them vulnerable to mugging and makes it difficult for them to save in the longer term.

This survey found that 26% of vendors had some form of account.

In Leeds, a partnership has been developed with Leeds City Credit Union so that any vendor selling from the Leeds office is eligible to join.

Manchester vendors were the most likely to have a bank account and, as was the case in the "Out of Pocket" report, Liverpool vendors the least likely to be using financial services.

Table 7.9. The proportion of vendors with accounts where they could deposit money.

Type of account	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total
Bank	19%	9%	26%	19%
Building society	6%	3%	8%	6%
Credit union	13%	-	2%	6%
Any account	35%	10%	25%	26%
	n=120	n=80	n=102	n=302

7.8. ID

As described in Section 7.7, many vendors lack conventional forms of identification and this can cause them problems in various areas of life such as in gaining access to financial services or some temporary accommodation.

We asked vendors whether they had a birth certificate, passport or driving licence which are common forms of identification which can be used for a variety of purposes. As the Table below shows, the majority of vendors lack conventional forms of ID. Vendors were most likely to have a birth certificate, but only in Manchester did more than half have one.

Table 7.10. The proportion of vendors with forms of identification.

ID	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total
Birth certificate	38%	30%	52%	41%
Passport	10%	18%	24%	17%
Driving licence	10%	11%	11%	11%
Any of these three	42%	40%	59%	47%
	n=120	n=80	n=102	n=302

8. Selling The Big Issue in the North

8.1. Introduction

We asked a number of questions about selling The Big Issue in the North, including whether vendors have a regular pitch from which they sell, whether they have regular customers and what effect selling the magazine has had on their life.

Not all vendors sell from the same pitch all the time. Those who do must use it regularly or they can lose the pitch. Therefore, vendors who have regular pitches are often those with more stable circumstances and lifestyles. The association between where vendors sell and their circumstances are explored in this section.

8.2. Length of time as a Big Issue in the North vendor

In May 2000, The Big Issue in the North Trust introduced its Big Futures programme which limits vendors to a maximum of two years selling the magazine.

Table 8.1 shows that just over half have been selling the magazine for less than a year, a slightly higher figure than last year. Fewer vendors than last year have been selling the magazine for over two years, 28% this year compared to 38% last year. Liverpool stands out as having a particularly high proportion of relatively new vendors while Manchester has relatively more vendors who have sold for longer than two years.

Table 8.1. When vendors first sold The Big Issue in the North.

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total	2000 Total
<6 months	31%	43%	29%	33%	25%
6-12 months	17%	24%	22%	20%	20%
1-2 years	24%	22%	11%	19%	18%
2-3 years	13%	6%	12%	11%	12%
3-5 years	11%	4%	15%	11%	14%
Over 5 years	5%	-	10%	6%	12%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=119	n=67	n=97	n=283	n=307

Note: this table does not include vendors who joined The Big Issue in the North during the survey.

8.3. Where vendors sell the magazine

The system of categorising the pitches from which the magazine is sold changed last year which means that the results from last year's survey are not directly comparable with the figures below. Overall, just under half of the vendors sell from pitches which are not in either of the three major cities. 70% have a badge which entitles them to sell from a particular pitch. This means they must sell from this pitch regularly in order to keep it.

Last year, the only major difference between the cities was that Manchester had a relatively low proportion of vendors selling from city centre pitches.

This year, Leeds stands out for its very low proportion of vendors who have a City centre floater badge and its high proportion of vendors with out-of-town pitches.

Table 8.2. Type of badge held by vendors

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total
City centre floater	13%	43%	41%	30%
City centre pitch	27%	24%	19%	23%
Out-of-town pitch	61%	30%	39%	46%
Night pitch	-	3%	1%	1%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=120	n=79	n=102	n=301

Note: "City centre floater" means a vendor sells in Leeds, Liverpool or Manchester but does not have a regular pitch. "City centre pitch" means they do have a pitch in one of these three cities. "Out-of-town pitch" means they sell from a regular pitch in another town of city in the region. "Night pitch" means they sell from a regular pitch in one of the three major cities during the evening.

Overall, the proportion of vendors who said they had a regular pitch and regular customers was little changed from last year. Last year, Leeds and Liverpool had a higher proportion with a regular pitch than did Manchester.

This year, Leeds' proportion had fallen slightly (to 68%) but Liverpool's figure fell to 60%. The proportion in Manchester remained the same (53%).

Last year, there were very few differences between the offices in terms of the proportion who have regular customers. However, this year Liverpool had a much higher figure (83%) compared to Leeds (72%) and Manchester (68%). Out of town vendors (86%) were much more likely to have regular customers than those in the city centres (67%). Almost all of those with a regular pitch (95%) said they had regular customers compared to 40% of those without a regular pitch.

8.4. The impact of selling The Big Issue in the North magazine

This year, we asked vendors a more detailed series of questions about the impact that selling The Big Issue in the North magazine has had upon their life. In the past, we have only asked about changes in self-confidence and motivation. This year, we added additional questions about criminal behaviour and drug use. The survey results show that selling The Big Issue in the North has a positive impact on vendors and their lifestyles.

We asked vendors about the impact of selling The Big Issue in the North on their drug use. This is the first time that comprehensive research has been undertaken on this subject. The results show that, for a large proportion of vendors, selling The Big Issue in the North helps to reduce drug use.

The table below shows that just under 90% of vendors used either the same amount or less drugs since they started selling The Big Issue in the North. The proportion of vendors whose drug use had reduced was very similar in all three cities. Liverpool vendors were the least likely to have experienced an increase in their drug use whereas Manchester's were the most likely to have done so.

Table 8.3. Change in vendors' drug use since selling The Big Issue in the North.

Change in drug use	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total
Increased	10%	5%	16%	11%
No change	47%	54%	45%	48%
Reduced	42%	41%	39%	41%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=99	n=56	n=69	n=224

Note: figures in the table indicate the proportion of vendors who had taken an illegal drug in the previous four weeks.

In addition, drug users were more likely to say that selling has increased their self-confidence. 77% of drug users said that their self-confidence had increased since starting to sell compared to 65% of non-drug users.

The 11% of vendors who said that their drug use had increased since selling The Big Issue in the North said that this had been due to having more money from their sales. In addition, around half of this group said that mixing with drug users at The Big Issue in the North had led to their drug use increasing.

Those vendors whose drug use had fallen gave a number of reasons for this having happened.

Table 8.4. Reasons given by vendors for their drug use having reduced.

Reason	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total
Worried about health	33%	9%	22%	24%
Encouragement from staff	26%	13%	7%	17%
Started using drugs services	24%	13%	7%	16%
Wanted more contact with family & friends	19%	13%	7%	14%
Got accommodation	10%	22%	7%	12%
Less spare time	21%	9%	-	12%
Support from family & friends	12%	13%	7%	11%
Undertook a detox	19%	-	4%	10%
	n=42	n=23	n=27	n=92

Note: figures refer to those whose drug use had reduced. Only reasons given by more than 5% of this group are included here.

We also asked vendors about their criminal behaviour before they started selling and subsequently. Overall, 84% had been convicted of a criminal offence before selling The Big Issue in the North (92% in Leeds, 83% in Liverpool and 76% in Manchester). However, since they began selling The Big Issue in the North only 15% have been convicted (18% in Leeds, 16% in Manchester and 9% in Liverpool).

Table 8.5. Change in vendors' criminal behaviour since selling The Big Issue in the North.

Change in criminal behaviour	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total
Increased	-	5%	6%	3%
No change	4%	11%	7%	7%
Reduced	96%	84%	88%	90%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=102	n=57	n=72	n=231

Note: figures in the table indicate the proportion of vendors who had been convicted of a criminal offence.

We also asked vendors how selling The Big Issue in the North Trust had affected the amount of crime they commit. As Table 8.5 shows, selling The Big Issue in the North has helped the vast majority of vendors to commit less crime. This is particularly the case in Leeds where, as described above, rates of offending before selling The Big Issue in the North are particularly high.

Table 8.6. Reasons given by vendors for committing less crime.

Reason	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total
Earn money from sales	87%	85%	81%	85%
Less spare time	38%	25%	13%	27%
Drug use reduced	30%	21%	10%	22%
Motivation from staff	28%	17%	2%	17%
Found accommodation	23%	10%	6%	15%
	n=98	n=48	n=63	n=209

Note: figures in the table indicate the proportion who said they now committed less crime than before.

As Table 8.6. shows, the most frequent reason given for offending less since selling the magazine is that vendors earned money through their sales and therefore have no need to commit acquisitive crime. Vendors also described other positive influences particularly having less spare time on their hands and using less drugs. It is encouraging that in Leeds, where drug use appears to be most problematic, a reduction in crime was linked to a reduction in drug use.

These findings also shed light on why many homeless people may commit crime.

The most common reasons appear to be a lack of money, drugs problems and having nothing else to do.

Finally, we asked vendors what effect selling The Big Issue in the North had on their motivation and self-confidence. The figures are very similar to those from previous years and again show that around three-quarters of vendors feel that selling has improved their self-confidence and motivation.

Just 5% said that their self-confidence had worsened and a mere 2% said that selling had had a negative effect on their motivation to change things in their life.

Table 8.7. The impact of selling The Big Issue in the North on self-confidence and motivation.

Improvement in ...	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	Total	2000 Total
Self-confidence	79%	75%	64%	72%	76%
Motivation	81%	85%	75%	80%	75%
	n=112	n=67	n=97	n=276	n=307

Note: this table does not include vendors who joined The Big Issue in the North during the survey.

9. Vendors' perceptions

9.1 Introduction

We asked vendors a series of questions about their attitudes to themselves, their future and The Big Issue in the North more generally. Vendors were read a series of statements and asked to say how strongly they agreed or disagreed with them.

9.2 Vendors' self-perceptions

One set of these questions were related to vendors' perceptions of their own future. As in previous years, the findings illustrates how most vendors wanted to move away from a life of homelessness and can foresee a time when they no longer need to sell The Big Issue in the North. Leeds vendors in particular stressed that they wanted more from life than selling the magazine.

Table 9.1. "I want more from life than selling The Big Issue in the North".

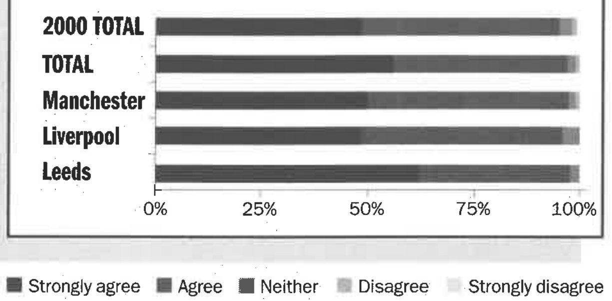
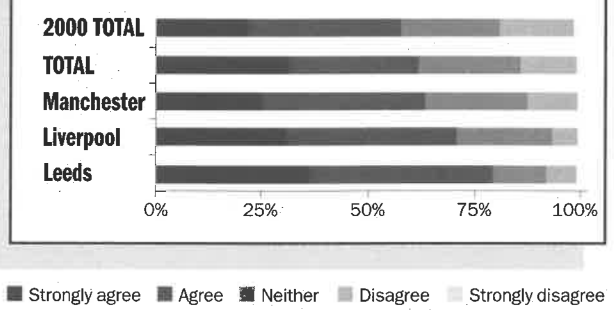


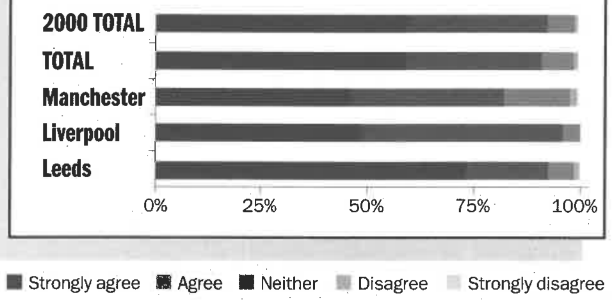
Table 9.2. "I feel I have a good future ahead of me".



Around three-quarters were optimistic about their futures, slightly higher than last year. There were only small differences between the various cities.

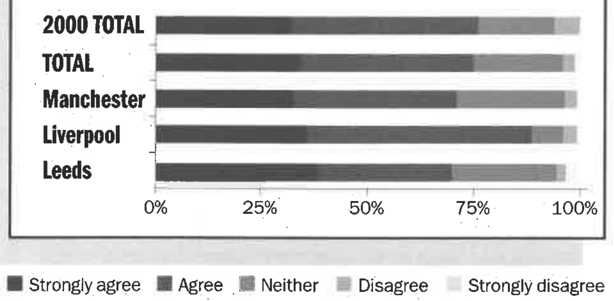
As described in Section 7, 64% had used an illegal drug in the past four weeks. Those vendors who were drug users were asked how they felt about the statement "I want to be drug-free". Again, as in previous years the vast majority agreed with the statement. It is striking that in Leeds, where drug problems appear to be most problematic, vendors were most likely to "strongly agree" with the statement. This pattern has been evident in previous years where drug problems have been worse in Liverpool and vendors in that city were most likely to say they wanted to be drug free.

Table 9.3. "I want to be drug-free".



Finally, in the set of questions was a more general statement: "homeless people should do more for themselves". As last year, over three-quarters agreed with the statement and very few disagreed. There were only minor differences between the three cities.

Table 9.4. "Homeless people should do more for themselves".



The findings from this set of questions were very similar to those last year, although there have been small positive increases in each case.

Vendors' responses seem to indicate that the majority believe they do have a more positive future ahead of them and that they, themselves, should play a key role in taking responsibility for their move away from homelessness.

9.3 Vendors' perceptions of The Big Issue in the North

Vendors were asked for their opinion of a set of statements about The Big Issue in the North. These included statements about the organisation generally, public support and the magazine itself.

A similar proportion as last year said they wanted to have a say in how the organisation is run, although as with the questions in the previous section there was a small increase. It remains encouraging that around half of the vendors wish to take more control of their own lives. In Leeds vendors were twice as likely as those in Manchester to strongly agree with this statement.

Table 9.5. "I want more of a say in how The Big Issue in the North is run".

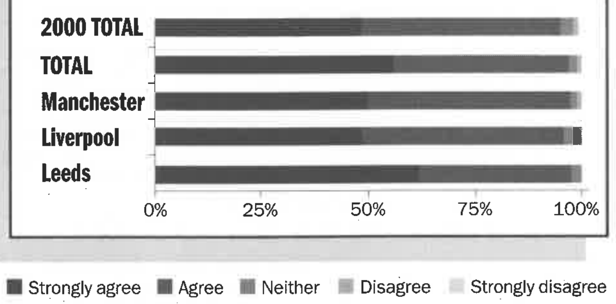


Table 9.6 shows that the vast majority of vendors agree that the public support The Big Issue in the North. There has been no significant change in the vendors' views on this matter since last year and there are no significant differences between cities.

Table 9.6 "The public are generally supportive of The Big Issue in the North".

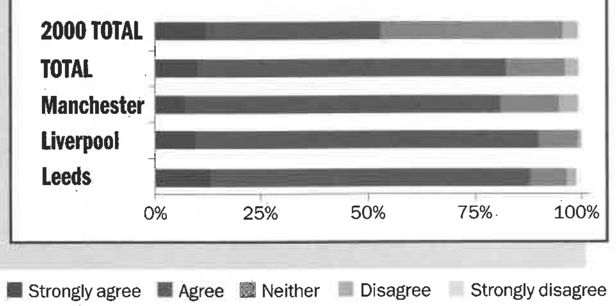
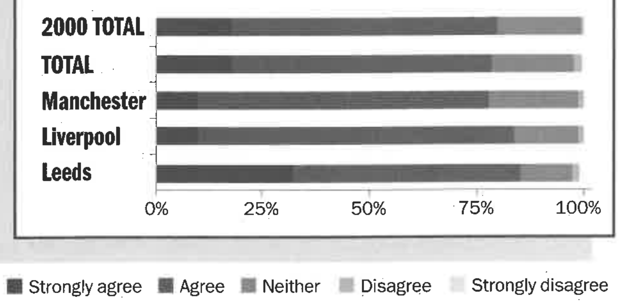


Table 9.7 shows that the vendors' opinion of the magazine is similar to last year. More than three-quarters agreed that the magazine was a good read and Leeds vendors, in particular, felt very strongly about this.

Table 9.7. "The Big Issue in the North is a good read".



On most of these questions, vendors gave slightly more positive opinions than was the case last year. The findings in 1999 and 2000 were that vendors were less optimistic and less confident about their futures than they were in 1996. While the survey findings have not changed dramatically in the last two years, it is encouraging that vendors appear to be more positive about the organisation, the future and motivated to change things themselves.

It is also noticeable that on virtually every one of these questions, Leeds vendors were the most positive of all despite the fact that drugs problems are most prevalent in that city.

10. Regional differences

10.1. Introduction

As will have been apparent throughout this report, while vendors in each city often have similar characteristics and experiences, there are significant differences between Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester. This section summarises the key points in each city and how these have changed over the past year.

It should be stressed that vendors are much more likely than the general population to experience a range of problems and difficulties in life. So, when something is referred to as "relatively low" it will probably still be much more prevalent than amongst the general population. For example, Leeds has a "relatively low" proportion of vendors with a disability but this is still four times higher than that of the general population.

10.2. Leeds

Previous surveys have highlighted the increase in problematic drug use amongst Leeds vendors which mirrors a more general trend in the city. As recently as 1997, just 37% of Leeds vendors said they had a drug problem. Leeds vendors are now the most likely to say they have a drug problem, to have used an illegal drug in the past month and to have injected.

Perhaps linked to this are the findings that Leeds vendors were the most likely to have a criminal record and to say they have physical and mental health problems. Leeds vendors were also the most likely to have been homeless for more than five years.

On a more positive note, Leeds vendors were the most likely to have their own tenancy and the least likely to have slept rough. Leeds vendors were also the most likely to have an educational qualification and to have an account where they could deposit money.

In terms of the impact of selling The Big Issue in the North magazine vendors in Leeds were the most likely to have reduced their offending since starting to sell The Big Issue in the North. This is particularly pleasing given the high rates of drug use amongst vendors there.

When asked for their perceptions and ambitions for the future, Leeds vendors were generally the most positive group. So, while the findings on drug use in particular are worrying the survey results show that there are also positive signs in Leeds.

10.3. Liverpool

There has been a high proportion of new vendors in recent years in Liverpool, indicating a high degree of turnover. This year's results perhaps indicate that we are seeing a slightly different group selling the magazine in the city.

In particular, there has been a sharp reduction in the proportion who said that they have a problem with drugs. Perhaps associated with this is the finding that Liverpool vendors were also the least likely to say they have physical or mental health problems. However, and worryingly, our anecdotal evidence, as well as the survey results, indicate an increase in the prevalence of crack cocaine in the city. Heroin remains the most common drug.

Accommodation is a problem among Liverpool vendors. They were the most likely to have slept rough and least likely to have their own tenancy.

Perhaps an indication of the long-standing economic problems on Merseyside are the findings that Liverpool vendors are the least likely to have had another paid job and have a qualification. Liverpool vendors were the most likely to be very long-term unemployed.

10.4. Manchester

Last year's report found that while there had been a decrease in the proportion of vendors with a drug problem in Manchester, in a lot of other areas of life the outlook was not so promising. This year, there is the lowest prevalence of problematic drug use for the second year running. This is again positive news.

On a wide range of other indicators, the results in Manchester were very close to the average for the three cities. This is an improvement over the previous year where, in a lot of areas of life, Manchester vendors were the most likely to experience problems.

Again there is a relatively high proportion of long term vendors who have sold the magazine for more than two years. The fact that the position of the Manchester vendors has improved over the previous year is perhaps an indication of a real improvement in the circumstances of the vendors rather than a new group with fewer needs having started to sell the magazine.

11. Methodology

11.1. Introduction

This section describes how the Annual Survey was conducted.

11.2. Process

This year's Annual Survey was carried out differently from that of previous years. Previous surveys have been conducted as part of the re badging process, whereby all vendors had to prove that they were eligible to sell the magazine in order to receive a new badge to continue selling. In practice, this meant providing evidence that they were either sleeping rough or living in insecure accommodation.

In May 2000, we introduced The Big Futures programme which limits each vendor to two years of selling the magazine. The Big Futures also includes a series of compulsory training programmes and monthly one-to-one meetings between vendors and staff. The intention is to work in a systematic and structured away with each vendor to enable them to move onto a job, training or other activity of their choice. Given that vendors can no longer sell The Big Issue in the North indefinitely we do not need to check their accommodation, although they must prove their eligibility when they first join.

Without the re badging process, we sought to interview a representative sample of vendors across the region.

11.3. Sample

We aimed to interview a representative sample of vendors so that the results would be comparable with those of previous years when all current vendors were interviewed. In order to do this, we first needed to calculate the total number of vendors selling the magazine at the time of the survey.

This was done through a simple count of all vendors who bought the magazine in the first week of May. This showed the following number of vendors in each city:

Leeds 137;

Liverpool 89;

Manchester 130.

We interviewed enough vendors to produce results with a margin of error of 2% at the 95% confidence level. The sample size was calculated for each city using an online sample size calculator (available at: http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm).

Interviews were also conducted in Preston and Sheffield where we have distribution points for the magazine. Interviews in Preston (6) were added to the figures for Liverpool and the interviews in Sheffield (10) were added to the figures for Leeds as these distribution points are served by our larger offices in these cities.

Vendors who participated in the survey were compensated for their lost selling time with two free copies of that week's The Big Issue in the North magazine.

11.4. Questionnaire design

The questionnaire was based on last year's to enable comparisons to be made.

However, we added additional questions particularly on vendors' drug use, criminal behaviour and the impact of selling The Big Issue in the North magazine. The full questionnaire is included in the appendix.

11.5. Fieldwork

Interviews were carried out by The Big Issue in the North Trust staff. The confidential nature of the survey was stressed to all participants and all interviews took place in a private space. Fieldwork took place during May 2001.

Data on gender, age, disability and ethnicity were taken from other records we hold about vendors.

Appendix
Annual Survey Questionnaire 2001

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE MUST BE FILLED IN BY A MEMBER OF STAFF, NOT A VENDOR

Date ____________ **Interviewer** ____________ **Ref (leave blank)** ____________

Office: Leeds ☐ Liverpool ☐ Manchester ☐ Preston ☐ Sheffield ☐

Badge Number ☐

1. When did you first start to sell The Big Issue?

Today ☐ Less than 6 months ago ☐ 6-12 months ago ☐ 1-2 years ago ☐

2-3 years ago ☐ 3-5 years ago ☐ Over 5 years ago ☐

2. VENDORS GETTING BADGED UP FOR THE FIRST TIME, GO TO Q3

How long have you been selling The Big Issue for (this time around if more than one spell selling)?

Less than 6 months ☐ 6-12 months ☐ 1-2 years ☐ 2-3 years ☐

3-5 years ☐ Over 5 years ☐

3. What type of badge do you have?

Yellow (city centre floater) ☐ Blue (city centre pitch) ☐

Pink (out of town) ☐ Orange (night) ☐

VENDORS GETTING BADGED UP FOR THE FIRST TIME, GO TO Q10

4. Do you have a regular pitch for selling The Big Issue?

Yes ☐ No ☐

5. Do you have regular customers who buy The Big Issue from you?

Yes ☐ No ☐

6. What effect has selling The Big Issue had on your self-confidence?

Increased it ☐ Made it worse ☐ No effect ☐

7. What effect has selling The Big Issue had on your motivation to change things in your life?

Increased it ☐ Made it worse ☐ No effect ☐

8. Where did you sleep last night?

Slept rough ☐ B & B ☐ Own tenancy ☐ (go to q 10)

Squat ☐ Hostel ☐ Night shelter ☐ Family/Friend's place ☐

Other ☐ (Where?) ______________

9. How long have you been homeless or experienced unsettled housing?

Less than 3 months ☐ 3-6 months ☐ 6-12 months ☐ 12 months-2 years ☐

2-3 years ☐ 3-5 years ☐ 5-10 years ☐ Over 10 years ☐

10. How old were you when you first became homeless?

Under-16 ☐ 16-20 ☐ 21-25 ☐ 26-30 ☐ 31-35 ☐ 36-40 ☐

41-45 ☐ 46-50 ☐ 50+ ☐

11. How did you first become homeless? Give the event or process, not the underlying reason (eg don't write "drugs") Tick one only

Left care ☐ Split up with partner ☐ Left parents' home due to problems ☐

Kicked out by parents ☐ Evicted ☐ Left prison ☐

Other, please state ______________

12. Have you slept rough at any time in the last year? That means on the streets, in a car or anywhere else that isn't normally used for sleeping.

Yes ☐ No ☐ (go to q16)

13. Thinking about the last time you slept rough, how many consecutive nights did you sleep rough for?

1 night ☐ 2-7 nights ☐ 8-14 nights ☐ 15-30 nights ☐

> 1-2 months ☐ > 2-6 months ☐ > 6 months-1 year ☐ > 1-2 years ☐

> 2-3 years ☐ > 3-5 years ☐ > 5–10 years ☐ > 10 years ☐

14. When you last slept rough did you try to get a place in a hostel or night shelter?

Yes ☐ No ☐

15. What was the main reason you slept rough rather than got a place in a hostel or night shelter? Tick one only

Hostels all full up ☐ Didn't know where to look ☐ Don't like hostels ☐

Barred from hostels ☐ No ID ☐ Own a pet ☐ Part of a couple ☐

Like to sleep rough ☐ Other ☐ (What?) ______________

16. Were you ever in care as a child?

Yes ☐ No ☐

17. Do you have any educational qualifications?

Yes ☐ No ☐ (go to q19)

18. Please look at the list and tell me which you have. Tick all they have

O levels, GCSEs, CSEs ☐ (how many?) ______________

A levels/NVQ 3/Advanced GNVQ ☐ Intermediate GNVQ/NVQ 2 ☐

Foundation GNVQ/NVQ1 ☐ University or Polytechnic degree/NVQ4/5 ☐

Other qualifications ☐ (What?) ______________

19. Have you ever had a formal, paid job apart from selling The Big Issue?

Yes ☐ No ☐ (go to q22)

20. When did your last formal paid job end?

Less than 3 months ago ☐ 3-6 months ago ☐ 6-12 months ago ☐

1-2 years ago ☐ 2-3 years ago ☐ 3-5 years ago ☐

5-10 years ago ☐ Over 10 years ☐

21. What was your job title?
Find out what they actually did, not who they worked for or where they worked. Eg, put "labourer", not "in a factory" or put "youth worker" not "in a youth centre".

____

Leave these blank, they will be filled in later

Managerial ☐ Professional ☐ Assoc Professional ☐ Clerical ☐

Craft ☐ Protective ☐ Sales ☐ Plant operatives ☐ Other ☐

22. What job do you want to do when you stop selling the Issue?

Find out what they actually want to do, not who they want to work for or where they want to work. Eg, put "labourer", not "in a factory" or put "youth worker" not "in a youth centre".

Leave these blank, they will be filled in later

Managerial ☐ Professional ☐ Assoc Professional ☐ Clerical ☐

Craft ☐ Protective ☐ Sales ☐ Plant operatives ☐ Other ☐

23. What training do you think you need to do to achieve this?
Keep asking until they have told you al the training they need. Tick all that apply.

None ☐ Basic literacy ☐ Basic numeracy ☐ Basic IT/Typing ☐

Finance/accounting ☐ Sales/Marketing ☐ Business planning ☐

Driving/HGV/Fork lift ☐ Specific vocational training ☐

Other ☐ (What?) ____________

24. I'm going to read out some areas of life that some people might have problems with. I want to know if you're having problems with any of them at the moment. Just tell me "yes" or "no". First, are you having problems with accommodation? Read out each in turn and tick those that they answer "yes" to.

Accommodation ☐ Employment ☐ Education/training ☐ Physical health ☐

Mental health ☐ Drugs ☐ Alcohol ☐ Money ☐ Committing crime ☐

Other areas of life ☐ (Please describe) ____________

25. Ask only if drug or alcohol use is a problem. If not, go to q26.
When did your drug or alcohol use first become a problem for you, before you became homeless or afterwards?

Before ☐ After ☐

26. Which of the following have you taken in the past 4 weeks?
Read out and tick all that apply.

Heroin (brown, smack, gear, bagel) ☐ Rock or crack cocaine (stone, bone) ☐

Cocaine powder (charlie) ☐

Benzodiazepines not prescribed (benzos, temazes) ☐
(including valium, temazepam and diazepam)

Prescribed Benzodiazepines (benzos, temazes) ☐
(including valium, temazepam and diazepam)

Cannabis ☐ Methadone prescribed ☐ Methadone not prescribed ☐

Amphetamines (billy, whizz, speed, white) ☐ Qat (khat) ☐ Alcohol ☐

Other illegal drugs ☐ (What?) ____________

IF NO DRUGS USED GO TO Q30, IF ONLY ALCOHOL USED GO TO Q30

27. Have you injected any of these drugs in the last 4 weeks?

Yes ☐ No ☐ (go to q29)

28. Which have you injected in the last 4 weeks?
Tick those that are injected.

Heroin ☐ Rock or crack cocaine ☐ Cocaine powder ☐

Benzodiazepines not prescribed ☐ Prescribed Benzodiazepines ☐

Methadone prescribed to you ☐ Methadone not prescribed to you ☐

Amphetamines ☐ Other illegal drugs ☐ (What?) ____________

29. Which has the most impact on your life or causes you most problems at the moment? Tick one only.

Heroin ☐ Rock or crack cocaine ☐ Cocaine powder ☐

Benzodiazepines not prescribed ☐ Prescribed Benzodiazepines ☐ Cannabis ☐

Methadone prescribed to you ☐ Methadone not prescribed to you ☐

Amphetamines ☐ Qat (khat) ☐ Alcohol ☐ Other illegal drugs ☐

(What?) ____________

30. Are you seeing anybody on a regular basis at the moment about your drug or alcohol use? That could be your GP or a specialist drug service.

Yes ☐ (go to q32) Needle exchange only ☐ No ☐

31. Do you think that you need to see anybody?

Yes ☐ No ☐

VENDORS GETTING BADGED UP FOR THE FIRST TIME, GO TO Q34

32. In your opinion, how has selling The Big issue affected your drug or alcohol use? Do you use more, about the same or less than you did before?

More ☐ Same ☐ (go to q34) Less ☐

33. Why do you say that? Do not prompt. Ask until "no".

More money to spend ☐ Mixing with other drug users ☐ Poor mental health ☐

Started using drug services ☐ Got into detox ☐ Encouragement from staff ☐

Got somewhere to live ☐ Projects ☐ Pressure from partner/friends/family ☐

Wanted contact with partner/friends/family ☐ Worried about health ☐

Less spare time ☐ Other reason ☐ (What?) ____________

34. Are you registered with a GP?

Yes ☐ No ☐

35. I don't want to know the reason but are you seeing anybody at the moment about any other aspect of your mental or physical health? I mean someone like your GP, a hospital, a counsellor or any other health worker.

Yes ☐ (go to q37) No ☐

36. Do you think that you need to see somebody?

Yes ☐ No ☐

VENDORS GETTING BADGED UP FOR THE FIRST TIME, GO TO Q41

37. Were you ever convicted of any criminal offence before you started selling the Issue?

Yes ☐ No ☐

38. Since you began selling The Big Issue have you been convicted of any criminal offence?

Yes ☐ No ☐ (If no to both q37 and q38, go to q41)

39. In your opinion, how has selling The Big issue affected the amount of crime you commit? Do you commit more, about the same or less crime than you did before?

More ☐ Same ☐ (go to q41) Less ☐

40. Why do you say that? Do not prompt. Ask until "no".

More money through selling: no need ☐ Using fewer drugs/alcohol ☐

Less spare time ☐ Staff motivation ☐ Got somewhere to live ☐ Projects ☐

Pressure from partner/friends/family ☐ Worried about criminal record ☐

Using more drugs ☐ Mixing with other offenders ☐

Other reason ☐ (What?) ____________

41. Do you have an account with any of the following?
Read out and tick those that apply.

Bank ☐ Building Society ☐ Credit union ☐

42. Do you have any of the following documents?
Read out and tick those that they actually have, not that they once had.

Birth certificate ☐ Passport ☐ Driving license ☐

I AM NOW GOING TO READ YOU SOME STATEMENTS AND I WANT YOU TO SAY HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT THEM. CHOOSE YOUR ANSWER FROM THE LIST.

43. VENDORS GETTING BADGED UP FOR THE FIRST TIME, GO TO Q46

The public generally support The Big Issue in the North.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

44. I want more of a say in how The Big Issue in the North is run.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

45. The Big Issue in the North magazine is a good read.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

46. (Ask only if a drug user) I want to be drug free.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

47. I want more from life than selling The Big Issue in the North.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

48. I feel I have a good future ahead of me.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

49. Homeless people should do more for themselves.

Strongly agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly disagree ☐

THAT'S THE END OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE.
THANKS FOR TAKING THE TIME TO GO THROUGH IT WITH ME.