

# Annual survey of The Big Issue in the North vendors 2002

In 2002, The Big Issue in the North merged with *diverse resources* to become The Big Life Company. The Big Issue in the North is now one of a number of social businesses and associated charities providing support and opportunities for people to change their lives. Our work with homeless people is based on the following principles:

We believe people are unique

We believe people have unlimited potential

People have the capacity to change

We demonstrate respect

We celebrate achievement

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## 1.0 Introduction

This year's survey, which is the fifth annual audit of our vendors, was carried out during December 2002. Every year *The Big Issue in the North/The Big Issue In The North* Trust conducts such a survey in order to:

- produce statistical data about current vendors which can be compared to the findings from previous research;
- provide information to assist us to develop our policies so that we can offer informed, practical services to our vendors;
- inform local and national debates on tackling homelessness;

■ gather together information to support our strategy for attracting funding for future service provision.

This year's audit contains a great deal of information that can be compared with the results of previous surveys. We have also added new questions on the recent health problems experienced by vendors, and the extent to which they have received treatment for these problems.

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

## 2.0 Summary

This section outlines the key findings from this year's survey. More detailed information is contained in the chapters that follow.

- vendors are mostly white men in their 20s and 30s (section 3);
- 3 in 10 vendors had spent time in local authority care before becoming homeless (section 3);
- 1 in 3 consider themselves to have a disability or limiting long-term illness (section 6);
- just over a third first became homeless before the age of 21 (section 4);
- a quarter have been homeless for more than three years (section 4);

- just under half have formal educational qualifications (section 7);
- the majority have had a formal paid job other than selling *The Big Issue in the North*, although more than half of these have not worked in the last 3 years (section 7);
- 4 in 10 have some form of financial account in which they can deposit money (section 6);

- almost 1 in 5 vendors had spent the previous night sleeping rough, and three quarters had slept rough at some point in the last year (section 5);
- most rough sleeping by vendors is relatively short-term (section 5);

- vendors said they currently had problems in five main areas of life - drugs, accommodation, money, eating properly and employment (section 6);
- the most commonly reported health problems were dental problems, feeling low all the time, backache, chest/breathing problems, and foot problems - but fewer than half had received help and/or treatment for these (section 6);
- 9 in 10 vendors said selling the magazine had helped improve their self-confidence and motivation to change (section 8);
- the majority want to move on from *The Big Issue in the North* and do other things in life (section 9).

## 3.0 Who are our vendors?

This section describes the main characteristics of our vendors in terms of gender, age and ethnic

background. It also looks at whether they have spent time in local authority care as a child.

### 3.1 How many vendors are there?

In the week prior to the start of the survey, a count was made of the number of vendors who bought a magazine from each of our three main offices. There were 347 vendors in total: 136 in Leeds, 92 in Liverpool and 119 in Manchester. This figure will change from week to week, but it represents the number of active vendors at the end of November 2002.

Not all of the vendors actually sell *The Big Issue in the North* in

these three cities – the magazine is sold on the streets of over 120 towns and cities across the North West, Yorkshire and Humberside – but vendors are recorded at the office from which they buy their magazines. We also have a fourth 'satellite' office in Sheffield (which had 27 active vendors that week), but as in previous years these vendors have been included in the figures for Leeds, as this is the administrative centre which serves the Sheffield site.

This year we badged up 308 vendors during the survey (compared to 302 vendors included in last year's audit, and 362 in 2000): 125 in Leeds, 84 in Liverpool and 99 in Manchester. Given the number of active vendors in the week prior to the start of the survey, this suggests that the Manchester vendors may be slightly under-represented in the figures.

### 3.2 Gender

The majority of vendors are male, as Table 3.1 shows. The proportion of female vendors overall has risen

slightly since last year's audit, however. The figures for the three cities are fairly similar, although Liverpool has the

highest proportion of female vendors this year, in contrast to 2001, when it had the lowest.

Table 3.1: gender by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
male	93%	87%	89%	90%	93%
female	7%	13%	11%	10%	7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=125	n=84	n=99	n=308	n=277

### 3.3 Age

Over two-thirds of our vendors are aged between 21 and 35 years old. The age profile of vendors has remained fairly

stable in recent years, although the average age has risen slightly this year to 32 (from 31 in both 2000 and 2001).

The youngest person to approach us for services was 16 and the oldest 57

Table 3.2: age by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
16-20 years	4%	-	3%	3%	5%
21-25 years	18%	8%	14%	14%	15%
26-30 years	31%	25%	26%	28%	31%
31-35 years	25%	38%	18%	26%	26%
36-40 years	14%	23%	21%	19%	16%
41-45 years	4%	6%	11%	7%	4%
46-50 years	3%	-	2%	2%	1%
over 50	1%	-	4%	2%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=125	n=84	n=99	n=308	n=276

Note: mean age for Leeds = 30.83 (range 16-52); mean age for Liverpool = 32.62 (range 21-42); mean age for Manchester = 33.05 (range 18-57).

While the difference between the cities is relatively minor, Leeds has a slightly younger age profile, with an average age of 31 years, compared to 33 in both Liverpool and Manchester. Female vendors are slightly younger than male

vendors overall (with a mean age of 29 years, compared to 32 for males) and their ages are grouped more closely around the average; the age range for female vendors is 21-40 while that for males is 16-57.

### 3.4 Ethnicity

Table 3.3: ethnicity by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total
White British	86%	88%	94%	89%
White Irish	4%	4%	1%	3%
any other White	3%	1%	3%	3%
Mixed White and Black	2%	2%	-	2%
Mixed White and Asian	-	1%	-	<1%
any other Mixed	1%	-	-	<1%
Bangladeshi	1%	-	-	<1%
Black African	-	2%	-	1%
any other	2%	-	1%	1%
not stated	1%	1%	1%	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
	n=125	n=84	n=98	n=307

Most vendors describe their ethnic background as White British. The categories have been changed this year to mirror those used in the most recent UK Census, so direct comparisons with previous

years are not possible. However the proportion of White Irish vendors in Liverpool does appear to have fallen slightly in 2002 (9% of Liverpool vendors described themselves as Irish in the previous survey).

### 3.5 Time spent in local authority care

Almost a third of vendors had spent time in care before becoming homeless. The proportion was very similar in 2001, as Table 3.4 shows, and

has remained relatively stable for the past three years. Only 7% of vendors said they first became homeless on leaving local authority care (see Table 4.2).

Table 3.4: local authority care by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
been in care	23%	36%	33%	30%	29%
not been in care	77%	64%	67%	70%	71%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
	n=124	n=83	n=99	n=306	n=276

## 4.0 Becoming homeless

As previous studies have shown, people can find themselves without a home for many

different reasons. This section describes how and at what age vendors first became homeless,

and looks at how long they have experienced unsettled housing.

### 4.1 When did vendors first become homeless?

More than half the vendors had first become homeless by the time they were 25, and over a third were homeless before their

21st birthday. In 2001 a higher proportion of vendors had reported becoming homeless at

such an early age, but this year's figures are very similar to those in earlier surveys.

Table 4.1: age at which vendors first became homeless by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
under 16	7%	7%	13%	9%	13%
16-20 years old	26%	19%	31%	26%	33%
21-25 years old	26%	19%	11%	19%	18%
26-30 years old	19%	23%	17%	20%	19%
31-35 years old	14%	20%	9%	14%	10%
36-40 years old	6%	12%	9%	9%	4%
41-45 years old	1%	-	5%	2%	2%
46-50 years old	1%	-	2%	1%	-
over 50	1%	-	2%	1%	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
	n=125	n=84	n=99	n=308	n=294

Vendors in Manchester are more likely to have become homeless at an earlier age; 44% of Manchester vendors were first homeless at 20 or

under, compared to 33% of Leeds vendors and 26% of Liverpool vendors. Previous surveys have shown Liverpool

vendors becoming homeless at a slightly older age than those in the other cities, and this is the case again this year.

### 4.2 How vendors became homeless

Vendors were asked to describe in broad terms how they first became homeless (i.e. the event or process which led to them losing their home, rather than the underlying reason for this). Splitting up with a partner was the most common reason vendors gave for first becoming homeless, followed by being kicked out by

their parents, and leaving the parental home due to problems. This year the proportion saying that they had been 'kicked out' by their family is higher than in previous years, while the proportion leaving home due to problems experienced has fallen – although in reality there is probably a fine dividing line between the two

events. The proportion of vendors who first became homeless on leaving prison, which had fallen in 2001, returned to the same level as in 2000.

As Table 4.2 shows, there was very little difference between the descriptions given by vendors in each of the three cities.

Table 4.2: How vendors first became homeless by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
left care	7%	7%	7%	7%	5%
split up with partner	24%	31%	22%	25%	27%
kicked out by parents	23%	17%	19%	20%	9%
left home due to problems	15%	17%	19%	17%	31%
evicted	8%	5%	5%	6%	7%
left prison	9%	10%	8%	9%	5%
left the armed forces	1%	1%	-	1%	in 'other'
other	12%	13%	19%	15%	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>
	n=124	n=84	n=99	n=307	n=296



### 4.3 Length of homelessness

Vendors without their own tenancy were asked how long they have been homeless or experienced unsettled housing. A quarter (25%) have been homeless for more than three years, which is slightly fewer

than last year, and continues the trend which has seen the proportion of long-term homelessness fall each year since the survey started (in 2001 the figure was 33% and in 2000 it was 39%).

Table 4.3: how long vendors have been homeless by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
less than 3 months	15%	17%	11%	14%	4%
3-6 months	20%	16%	11%	15%	8%
7-12 months	15%	16%	20%	17%	20%
1-2 years	12%	18%	20%	17%	18%
2-3 years	13%	9%	14%	12%	18%
3-5 years	13%	13%	2%	9%	12%
5-10 years	11%	10%	10%	10%	12%
more than 10 years	2%	3%	12%	6%	9%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=92	n=71	n=84	n=247	n=255

The differences between the cities are not significant, although Manchester vendors are more likely to have been homeless for more than 5 years (22%

compared to 13% in both Leeds and Liverpool). This is a change from last year, when Leeds vendors were most likely to have been very long-term homeless.

## 5.0 Housing situation

Homelessness does not always mean that someone is sleeping on the streets, and as previous surveys have shown, by no means all of our vendors are rough sleepers. However the majority of those who have had accommodation in the past have tended to be in temporary or unstable accommodation,

although some vendors will have been supported in moving into their own tenancies since starting to sell *The Big Issue in the North*.

This section explores vendors' current housing situation, and examines the issues around rough sleeping in some depth.

### 5.1 Current accommodation

Vendors were asked to describe the type of accommodation they had slept in the previous night. In a hostel or with friends and family were the most common responses, followed by the vendor's own tenancy and sleeping rough. Almost 1 in 5 vendors had spent the previous night sleeping rough, compared

to 1 in 8 in 2001 (sleeping rough includes sleeping on the streets as well as in warehouses, cars or other settings which are not designed for sleeping). In all other respects, current accommodation for vendors overall was broadly similar to last year, although slightly fewer vendors had their own tenancy in 2002.

Table 5.1: last night's accommodation by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
slept rough	11%	30%	15%	18%	13%
bed & breakfast	2%	2%	8%	4%	5%
own tenancy	24%	16%	15%	19%	23%
squat	4%	2%	2%	3%	3%
hostel	29%	16%	24%	24%	24%
night shelter	1%	13%	-	4%	in 'other'
with friends or family	22%	19%	30%	24%	25%
other	6%	1%	5%	5%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=125	n=83	n=99	n=307	n=296

Note: 'other' (n=14) includes bed-sit, boat, caravan, council flat, unspecified homeless accommodation, house (type unspecified), supported/shared housing, and unspecified temporary accommodation

As in previous years, it was apparent that most vendors who were staying with family or friends did not see this as a long-term solution; two-thirds (66%) of them said they currently had problems with accommodation. Only those vendors who were sleeping rough or staying in a night shelter were more likely to say they had accommodation problems.

Vendors who had been selling the magazine for more than 2 years were most likely to have their own tenancy and least likely to be sleeping rough or staying in a hostel.

There were some differences in current accommodation between the cities. Vendors in Liverpool were more likely to be sleeping rough, more likely to be sleeping in a night shelter and less likely to be staying in a hostel than vendors in the other cities. Leeds vendors were more likely to have their own tenancy than vendors in Liverpool or Manchester. In most respects the figures for Manchester were close to those for vendors overall, although vendors in Manchester were more likely to be staying with friends or family.

5.2 Rough sleeping in the last twelve months

All vendors were asked whether they had slept rough during the last 12 months. Previous experience has shown that most vendors will sleep rough from time to time, even if they are not currently doing so.

Three quarters of vendors confirmed that they had slept rough at some point in the last year. This proportion remains unchanged from 2001, and has been relatively constant in the

last few surveys. Unlike last year there was very little difference between the three offices, as is shown in Table 5.2(a). It should be stressed that vendors do not necessarily sleep rough in the cities from which they sell, so their experiences do not always relate to the situation and/or to services within these cities.

Previous surveys have shown a clear relationship between

length of time as a vendor and the likelihood of having slept rough in the last 12 months. Such a relationship was also apparent this year, albeit in a different direction. Vendors who have been selling the magazine for more than a year are much less likely to have slept rough in the last 12 months; 53% of them have done so, compared to 84% of vendors who have been selling for a year or less.

Table 5.2(a): rough sleeping in the last 12 months by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
had slept rough	73%	76%	76%	75%	75%
had not slept rough	27%	24%	24%	25%	25%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=125	n=84	n=99	n=308	n=302

Those vendors who had slept rough in the previous 12 months were asked to say how many consecutive nights they had done so on the most recent occasion they had slept rough.

Although most rough sleeping by vendors is relatively short-term, as has been seen in previous surveys, the proportion

who slept rough for a week or less the last time that they did so fell from just under half in 2001 to less than a third in 2002, and the proportion who spent less than a month sleeping rough on the most recent occasion fell from almost three quarters to just over a half. Overall 7% of vendors had spent more than a year on the streets, which was a return to the

level of longer-term rough sleeping last seen in 2000. There were no significant differences in experiences between the cities, although vendors in Liverpool were slightly more likely than vendors in Leeds or Manchester to have spent more than a year sleeping rough (as Table 5.2(b) shows).

Table 5.2(b): number of consecutive nights spent sleeping rough by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
1 night only	3%	2%	3%	3%	6%
2-7 nights	29%	27%	22%	26%	40%
1-2 weeks	8%	16%	12%	11%	15%
2-4 weeks	9%	11%	18%	12%	9%
1-2 months	9%	8%	7%	8%	12%
2-6 months	29%	16%	26%	24%	12%
6-12 months	9%	9%	10%	9%	4%
1-2 years	2%	6%	3%	4%	2%
2-5 years	1%	5%	1%	2%	1%
over 5 years	1%	2%	-	1%	-
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=92	n=64	n=74	n=230	n=224

Vendors who had slept rough in the last 12 months were asked whether they had tried to find a place in a hostel or night shelter on the most recent occasion. The majority (68%) said that they had tried to find temporary accommodation, a proportion

that was very similar to that seen in 2001. This year vendors in Liverpool (64%) were the least likely to say they had tried, although the differences between the cities were not significant.

Table 5.2(c): vendors who tried to get a hostel place by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
tried to get a place	69%	64%	72%	68%	69%
didn't try to get a place	31%	36%	28%	32%	31%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=92	n=64	n=75	n=231	n=224

Vendors were also asked why they had slept rough rather than getting some form of temporary accommodation. As was the case last year, by far the most common reason given was that the hostels were full. Finding hostels an unattractive option was the next most likely response. Although the proportion of vendors who said that they didn't like hostels fell in this year's survey, some of the reasons given under 'other' (i.e. wanting to avoid drug users, being worried about theft or violence in hostels, having been bullied in hostels in the past etc) were also related to

the unattractiveness of hostels as a place to stay. Vendors in Leeds were more likely than those in Liverpool or Manchester to say there were no hostel places available (unlike last year, when this problem was mentioned most frequently by vendors in Liverpool), and less likely to say they didn't like hostel accommodation. A higher proportion of Liverpool vendors claim to be barred from local hostels, and not having the required form of identification was a problem raised most often by vendors in Manchester.

Once again it should be emphasised that vendors do not inevitably look for temporary accommodation in the cities in which they sell, so their comments will not necessarily relate to services in Leeds, Liverpool or Manchester. Moreover they may have thought that the hostels and night shelters were full, or been told that they were by others, rather than this actually being the case. As in previous years, only a tiny proportion of vendors overall (1%) said they actually preferred to sleep rough.

Table 5.2(d): main reason vendors slept rough by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
hostels all full	47%	34%	23%	36%	42%
didn't know where to look	8%	8%	5%	7%	7%
don't like hostels	4%	14%	18%	11%	16%
barred from hostels	6%	13%	3%	7%	8%
had no ID	-	2%	16%	6%	4%
own a pet	4%	2%	-	2%	4%
part of a couple	3%	3%	8%	5%	3%
like to sleep rough	1%	2%	-	1%	1%
other	26%	23%	27%	26%	13%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=91	n=64	n=74	n=229	n=224

Note: 'other' included wanting to avoid drug users, problems with the referral/assessment process, being bullied in hostels in the past, having no hostels in the area, having rent arrears, being worried about violence/theft in the hostel, having no money/benefits, being on the waiting list etc.

5.3 Knowledge of the new Homelessness Act

A new Homelessness Act came into effect in 2002, and vendors were asked whether they had heard about it or been given any information about it.

the changes it had introduced. However it might reasonably be expected that vendors would only be told about their new entitlements by services on a 'need to know' basis, for example when their current housing situation changed and it became imperative that these were explained.

Table 5.3: heard about the new Homelessness Act by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total
yes, got information about it	7%	4%	8%	6%
yes, heard about it	15%	16%	13%	14%
no, neither	79%	81%	79%	80%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=124	n=84	n=99	n=307

6.0 Problems facing vendors

This section examines the problems faced by vendors, with particular reference to their drug and alcohol problems, and to the health problems they have recently experienced.

It also looks at their possession (or lack of possession) of conventional forms of identification and some of the difficulties this may cause.

6.1 Disability or long-term illness

As Table 6.1 shows, the proportion of vendors (34%) who described themselves as having a disability or long-term illness that limits their day-to-day activities rose slightly from last year, but did not reach the levels seen in previous surveys (i.e. 44% in 2000 and 39% in 1999). This compares to a figure of 18% for the population overall, and 13% of those of working age (UK Census 2001). Once again vendors in Leeds were less likely than vendors in Liverpool or Manchester to say they had such a disability, although the differences between the cities were not significant this year. Female vendors (48%) were slightly more likely to say they had a disability than male vendors (33%), as was the case last year.

In 2001 there was a clear relationship between disability and age. This was not the case in this year's survey, however. Just less than one third of vendors in the 25 or under and 26-35 age groups say they have a limiting disability or long-term illness, and just over one third of vendors aged 35 or more say that they do.

Whilst disability is not the same as poor health (see Table 6.2 for information on current problems), those vendors with a disability were significantly more likely to say they were experiencing problems with their health. 64% were currently having physical health problems (compared to 24% of vendors who did not report a disability) and 47% were having problems with their mental health (compared to 16% of vendors without a disability).

Table 6.1: disability or long-term illness by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
did not have a disability	72%	62%	62%	66%	69%
had a disability	28%	38%	38%	34%	31%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=125	n=84	n=99	n=308	n=302

6.2 Problems in life

Vendors were asked whether they were currently experiencing problems in a range of areas (see Table 6.2). It is important to remember that these were vendors' own perceptions – there are many different reasons why people may not acknowledge or wish to say that they are having problems with certain areas of their lives.

included for the first time in this survey). Vendors were slightly less likely to report having problems with employment and education or training than they were in 2001, but in all other respects the proportions have changed little in the last year.

The same five categories are also the five main problem areas for vendors in each of the three cities, although the order of priority varies by city. Problems with drugs were those most commonly reported by vendors in Leeds, whilst it was problems with accommodation that were mentioned most frequently by vendors in both Liverpool and Manchester.

There were distinct differences between the cities in only three of the problem areas we asked questions about. Vendors in Liverpool (69%) were more likely to say they were experiencing accommodation problems than vendors in Manchester (53%) or Leeds (46%). Manchester vendors (46%) were less likely to report having problems with drugs than those in Leeds (72%) or Liverpool (68%), as had been the case in the previous two surveys.



However vendors in Leeds (9%) were less likely than vendors in both Liverpool (20%) and Manchester (18%) to say that they were currently having problems with alcohol.

Female vendors (45%) were more likely than male vendors (24%) to say they were experiencing mental health problems, as they were in 2001. In all other respects however there were no major

differences between the genders.

Shorter-term vendors i.e. those who had been selling for 12 months or less were much more likely to have accommodation problems, as would be expected (vendors must be homeless or vulnerably housed to start selling *The Big Issue in the North*, but through the income they earn and the support services provided at each of the offices they are more

likely to be able to find suitable accommodation). In all other respects there were no significant differences between the length of time vendors had been selling and the problems they were experiencing, although vendors who had been selling for more than a year were slightly more likely to report having problems with their physical health, mental health, education and training and offending.

Table 6.2: problems currently experienced by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
accommodation	46%	69%	54%	55%	54%
employment	42%	42%	41%	42%	53%
education/training	18%	13%	24%	19%	26%
physical health	36%	38%	39%	38%	35%
mental health	23%	29%	28%	26%	25%
money	49%	51%	46%	48%	53%
committing crime	9%	7%	13%	10%	7%
personal safety	14%	20%	18%	17%	n/a
eating properly	45%	45%	40%	44%	n/a
drugs	72%	68%	46%	62%	61%
alcohol	9%	20%	18%	15%	16%
other	5%	2%	5%	4%	n/a
	n=125	n=84	n=99	n=308	n=302

Note: three new categories were added this year i.e. personal safety, eating properly and 'other' problems, so there are no comparative figures for 2001. The most common 'other' problems reported related to family relationships.

6.3 Onset of drug and alcohol problems

Those vendors who reported that they were currently experiencing difficulties with drugs and/or alcohol were asked when this first became problematic. As Table 6.3 shows, more than 4 in 5 said that they were having problems with their drug and/or alcohol use before they became homeless.

The proportion has risen slightly since the last survey; in 2001, 72% of vendors with drug problems said their drug use became problematic before they first became homeless, compared to 84% of such vendors this year (no comparative figures are available for alcohol problems in 2001).

The figures confirm the findings from previous surveys – that for the majority of vendors, drug problems precede homelessness.

As was the case in 2001, there were only very small differences between the three cities in this context.

Table 6.3: drug/alcohol problems before or after becoming homeless by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total
before	81%	88%	80%	83%
afterwards	19%	12%	20%	17%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=94	n=60	n=59	n=213

6.4 Crack cocaine use

In 2001, vendors were asked a series of detailed questions about their drug use in order to update the information last gathered in our Health Matters survey in 1997. These questions were not repeated in this year's audit, but as a result of anecdotal evidence from staff about the increasing use of crack cocaine amongst vendors, all vendors (and not just those who felt they had a current drug problem) were asked whether or not they had used crack in the last month.

More than half of the 288 vendors who answered this question said that they had used crack cocaine in the previous four weeks, compared to just over a third of all vendors in 2001. This increase in crack use in the last year confirms the suspicions raised by staff and suggests that more work needs to be done around how often vendors are using crack cocaine, how much they use, how they use it, and what other illicit drugs (if any) they are taking alongside crack cocaine.

There was a clear difference in reported crack use between the three cities, with vendors in Liverpool being much more likely to have used crack cocaine in the last 4 weeks than vendors in either Leeds or Manchester (see Table 6.4). Whilst the Liverpool vendors were also more likely to have used crack in 2001, the relative difference this year is much more pronounced.

Table 6.4: crack cocaine use in the last 4 weeks by office (all vendors)

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
used crack	53%	73%	46%	56%	37%
not used crack	47%	27%	54%	44%	63%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=119	n=77	n=92	n=288	n=302

Just under half (47%) of all vendors and just over half (56%) of those who had used crack in the last 4 weeks said that at some point in their lives they had received information and/or advice about crack use.

This means that 44% of vendors who are currently using crack cocaine have never been given any such information.

There were no significant differences between the cities in

either respect, although vendors in Liverpool who were currently using crack were slightly less likely than those in Leeds or Manchester to have received any relevant information or advice.

6.5 Use of specialist drug and alcohol services

Vendors were also asked whether they were seeing anyone such as a GP or specialist drug service on a regular basis about their drug or alcohol use. Overall 44% of vendors said that they were currently involved in such treatment, and a further 10% said they were using needle exchange services only (as Table 6.5 shows). Vendors in Leeds (62%) were more likely to be seeing some sort of drug service than vendors in either Liverpool (46%) or Manchester (49%).

However of those vendors who reported current problems with drugs and/or alcohol, 51% were involved with treatment services and another 12% were using needle exchanges only, which means that 37% of vendors currently experiencing problematic drug and/or alcohol use were not in contact with any kind of treatment service. Again there were differences between the three cities, with 49% of Liverpool vendors with drug/alcohol problems receiving no support from

services, compared to 36% of such vendors in Manchester and 31% in Leeds.

Similarly 40% of vendors who had used crack cocaine in the last 4 weeks were not using any treatment services at all, with vendors in Liverpool again being much less likely than vendors in the other two cities to be linked with treatment services (54% of current crack users in Liverpool were not seeing anyone, compared to 36% in Manchester and 30% in Leeds).

Table 6.5: seeing anyone about drug or alcohol use by office (all vendors)

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total
yes, seeing someone	48%	36%	46%	44%
yes, but needle exchange only	14%	10%	3%	10%
no, not seeing anyone	38%	54%	51%	46%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=121	n=78	n=91	n=290

Note: no comparable figure for all vendors is available for 2001.

6.6 Health services

Overall 85% of vendors are currently registered with a GP. Whilst this compares with a figure of over 99% for the general population (Health & Personal Social Statistics: Department of Health 2002), the proportion of

GP-registered vendors has risen more since the last survey than it had done in the previous four years. In 1997 our Health Matters survey found that 71% of vendors were registered with a general practitioner.

Table 6.6(a): vendors registered with a GP by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
registered with a GP	84%	82%	89%	85%	76%
not registered with a GP	14%	18%	11%	14%	24%
don't know	2%	-	-	1%	-
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=124	n=84	n=99	n=307	n=295

Only 29% of vendors overall are currently registered with a dentist, compared to 48% of the general population (General Dental Service - Selected Statistics for England: Department of Health 2002).

Vendors in the North have not been asked about registration

with a dentist before, but in similar surveys earlier in 2002, 34% of vendors in Wales and 17% of vendors in the South West said they were registered with a dentist, so the situation for our vendors compares favourably with that of vendors elsewhere in the country.

Table 6.6(b): vendors registered with a dentist by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total
registered with a dentist	31%	32%	25%	29%
not registered with a dentist	68%	67%	75%	70%
don't know	1%	1%	-	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=124	n=84	n=99	n=307

There is no significant difference between the three cities in terms of either GP or dental registration. Nor is there any clear gender difference, although female vendors are slightly more likely than male vendors to be registered with both a GP (94% compared to 84%) and with a

dentist (39% compared to 28%). Similarly, whilst vendors who have been selling for a year or more are more likely to be registered with a GP - but not with a dentist - than vendors who have been selling for less than 12 months (93% compared to 84%), this difference is not statistically significant.

6.7 Health problems

In this year's audit we asked vendors a series of questions about the health problems they had experienced in the last 6 months, and their access to help and/or treatment for these problems. These questions were designed to give us up-to-date information that was last gathered in the *Health Matters* survey in 1997.

The health problems most commonly reported by vendors overall were dental problems, feeling low all the time, backache, chest/breathing problems and foot problems (see Table 6.7a). These were also the main problems for vendors in each of the cities except for Manchester, where asthma replaced foot problems in the top five. While all of the other health problems on the list were experienced by fewer than 1 in 5 of the vendors overall, with the exception of TB (which was not reported at all) only epilepsy, diabetes and STDs were reported to have been

experienced by fewer than 10% of vendors in the last 6 months.

Whilst a number of these findings are quite alarming, it is likely that there has been some under reporting of health problems. In many cases vendors themselves will be judging what is wrong with them, rather than being diagnosed by a health professional, which may result in fewer problems being raised. This may be particularly true of problems related to their mental health, which can often be difficult for individuals to self-diagnose and/or to acknowledge. Experience has shown that vendors may also have low expectations about the state of their health, and given the variety of other problems vendors have to deal with (as shown in Table 6.2), health problems are not always a high priority for them.

The problems reported by vendors this year present a very similar picture to the one from

our *Health Matters* survey five years ago. The proportion of vendors who have experienced skin problems, eye problems and muscular/skeletal problems in the last 6 months are somewhat lower, but in all other respects the figures are much the same.

The only marked difference in health problems between the three cities this year is for epilepsy, with a significantly higher proportion of vendors in Liverpool reporting that they are epileptic. Some minor differences are probably worth noting, however. Vendors in Manchester are slightly more likely to complain of eye problems, asthma and backache. Vendors in Liverpool are slightly more likely to report having chest and/or respiratory problems, and slightly less likely to experience skin problems. Vendors in Leeds have a slightly higher propensity to report having dental problems than vendors in the other two cities.

Table 6.7(a): health problems experienced in the last 6 months by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	1997
asthma	14%	19%	24%	19%	14%
backache	32%	27%	36%	32%	27%
chest/breathing problems	27%	33%	29%	30%	33%
dental problems	46%	41%	41%	43%	48%
foot problems	22%	23%	20%	21%	20%
eye problems	10%	14%	20%	15%	24%
headaches	18%	19%	20%	19%	21%
skin problems	19%	10%	17%	16%	26%
tuberculosis	-	-	-	-	-
epilepsy	2%	12%	4%	6%	4%
muscular/skeletal problems	12%	12%	16%	13%	22%
diarrhoea and vomiting	11%	11%	10%	11%	8%
diabetes	2%	2%	2%	2%	-
sexually transmitted disease	-	1%	1%	1%	1%
feeling low all the time	37%	41%	36%	38%	n/a
other mental health issues	18%	16%	17%	17%	n/a
other problems	14%	14%	13%	14%	19%
	n=125	n=84	n=99	n=308	n=212

Note: different questions about mental health were asked in the *Health Matters* survey, so no direct comparisons are possible for 'feeling low all the time' and 'other mental health issues'. However in 1997, 32% of vendors said they regularly felt depressed, and 14% said they were currently suffering from a mental health problem.



Female vendors are much more likely to report having asthma (48% of females compared to 15% of males), suffering from headaches (39% compared to 17%), or experiencing other health problems (26% compared to 12%). The proportion of female vendors who report feeling low all the time is also slightly higher than the proportion of male vendors, although the gender difference in this respect is not significant.

Vendors who had sold the magazine for more than a year were more likely to have problems with headaches (27% compared to 17%), and less likely to suffer from diarrhoea and vomiting (4% compared to 12%) than vendors who had been selling for 12 months or less. There were no other

significant differences with respect to length of selling time, although it is interesting to note that the only two health problems reported by a slightly higher proportion of shorter term than longer term vendors were dental problems and foot problems.

Vendors who currently have drug and/or alcohol problems are much more likely than those who do not to report feeling low all the time (44% compared to 23%). There were no other clear differences between these two groups, although vendors with drug or alcohol problems were generally more likely to report health problems within the last 6 months.

Table 6.7(b) shows the proportion of vendors experiencing each of the problems listed who were

offered some form of help and/or treatment for them by a health-care worker. The problems for which help was most commonly received by vendors overall were diabetes, 'other' health problems (including DVT, Hepatitis A, B and C, hernias and insomnia), epilepsy, asthma and skin problems - in all of these cases at least half of the reporting vendors had been offered treatment.

However for all five of the most commonly reported health problems (as shown in Table 6.7(a) above), help or treatment from a health professional was received by fewer than 40% of the reporting vendors. Most noticeably only a quarter of vendors with dental problems were treated for these, which perhaps reflects the proportion of vendors who are registered with a dentist.

Table 6.7(b): vendors who have had help with health problems experienced by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total
asthma	59%	56%	67%	61%
backache	28%	22%	39%	30%
chest/breathing problems	35%	21%	52%	36%
dental problems	26%	35%	22%	27%
foot problems	30%	26%	40%	32%
eye problems	46%	42%	30%	38%
headaches	18%	25%	35%	26%
skin problems	50%	38%	65%	53%
tuberculosis	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
epilepsy	67%	70%	50%	65%
muscular/skeletal problems	40%	40%	56%	46%
diarrhoea and vomiting	29%	11%	30%	24%
diabetes	67%	100%	100%	86%
sexually transmitted disease	n/a	-	100%	50%
feeling low all the time	30%	32%	44%	35%
other mental health issues	46%	39%	65%	50%
other problems	53%	67%	92%	67%

Note: the figures relate to vendors who reported these problems only (as shown in Table 6.7a).

Clearly the rate of receiving help and/or treatment amongst vendors is much lower than the rate of reported health problems. Whilst a number of these are relatively minor, and are not the type of health problems for which people would generally be expected to seek treatment, it is nevertheless a matter of concern that such a low proportion of

vendors overall get professional medical help for the health problems they experience.

The only significant difference between the three cities was in terms of help received for chest and/or respiratory problems; vendors in Manchester were much more likely, and vendors in Liverpool were much less likely

to have been treated for such a problem (the proportion for the Leeds vendors was very similar to that for vendors overall).

The only clear gender differences were for asthma and 'other' health problems; the proportion of female vendors who received help was higher in both cases (87% compared to

52% of males for asthma, and 26% compared to 12% of males for other health problems experienced).

Vendors who had been selling the magazine for a year or less were much more likely to have been treated for dental problems (31% compared to 11% of vendors who had been selling for more than a year). There were no other notable differences in respect of selling times.

In general vendors with drug and/or alcohol problems were less likely to have received help for the other health problems they reported. In particular, the proportion of this group who were treated for dental problems, epilepsy and muscular/skeletal

problems was significantly lower than the proportion of other vendors (22% compared to 42% for dental problems; 46% compared to 100% for epilepsy; and 37% compared to 73% for muscular/skeletal problems).

Half of all vendors said that they were currently seeing someone such as a GP, hospital, counsellor or other health worker about a health problem (although they were not asked about the nature of this problem). This proportion is much higher than in last year's survey, when only a quarter of vendors were linked into health services. That said, more than a third (35%) of vendors overall who felt they currently had problems with their physical

and/or mental health (as shown in Table 6.2) were not seeing anyone about these problems.

There was a marked difference between the cities in this respect. Vendors in Liverpool were much less likely to be seeing a health professional than vendors in either Leeds or Manchester (see Table 6.7c). There was no gender difference or difference between vendors with and without drug or alcohol problems, but a much higher proportion of vendors who had been selling the magazine for more than a year were currently linked into a health service (64% compared to 44% of vendors who had been selling for 12 months or less).

Table 6.7(c): vendors seeing someone about a health problem currently by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
seeing someone	49%	38%	58%	49%	26%
not seeing someone	51%	62%	42%	51%	74%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=120	n=84	n=99	n=303	n=295

6.8 Forms of ID

As has been noted in previous surveys, many vendors lack what are accepted as conventional forms of identification, and this can

cause them problems in a variety of settings (gaining access to financial services or to some forms of temporary accommodation, for example).

Table 6.8: vendors with forms of identification by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
birth certificate	33%	36%	55%	41%	41%
passport	13%	10%	22%	15%	17%
driving licence	10%	7%	12%	10%	11%
any of these	41%	43%	61%	48%	47%
	n=125	n=84	n=99	n=308	n=302

Once again this year, just under half of the vendors were currently in possession of a birth certificate, passport or driving licence (or any combination of these), as Table 6.8 shows. As was the case in 2001, vendors were most likely to have a birth certificate, but it is only in Manchester that more

than 50% of vendors have one of these. There is a very definite difference between the cities, with vendors in Manchester being much more likely to have some form of identification (and particularly a birth certificate or passport) than vendors in either Leeds or Liverpool.

## 6.9 Use of financial services

This year the proportion of vendors having some form of financial account in which they are able to deposit money increased to 39% (from 26% in 2001). This is encouraging given the problems - for example vulnerability to mugging and difficulty saving - which vendors without such accounts can face, as was described in our *Out of Pocket* report in 2000.

Manchester vendors are significantly more likely than vendors in the other two cities to have a bank account. The Co-Operative Bank runs a scheme in Manchester allowing vendors without an address or more conventional forms of ID to open an account with them, and this is

doubtless reflected in the higher proportion of Manchester vendors with bank accounts. Whilst the same scheme is also available in Liverpool, it is only recently that a link has been established with a local branch in the city.

In Leeds a partnership agreement with Leeds City Credit Union means that any vendors selling from the Leeds office are eligible to join - accounting for the much greater likelihood for Leeds vendors to be part of a credit union.

As was the case in last year's audit and in the *Out of Pocket* survey, vendors in Liverpool are much less likely than those in Leeds or Manchester to be using any kind of financial services.

**Table 6.9: vendors with financial service accounts by office**

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
bank account	15%	10%	44%	23%	19%
building society account	8%	11%	7%	8%	6%
post office account	4%	1%	3%	3%	n/a
credit union account	19%	1%	-	8%	6%
any of these	41%	19%	53%	39%	26%
	n=125	n=84	n=99	n=308	n=302

## 7.0 History of education and employment

This section examines the proportion of vendors with educational qualifications. It also describes the jobs that vendors have done in the past, identifies how long it is since

they were in other forms of employment, and looks at the type of work they would like to move into when they stop selling *The Big Issue in the North*.

### 7.1 Educational qualifications

Just under half (46%) of vendors overall have a formal educational qualification, as Table 7.1(a) shows. The proportion has fallen somewhat from 2001, which was the first year that this question was asked. As in last year's survey, there are marked differences between the cities, with vendors in Leeds being much more likely to have an educational qualification, and vendors in Liverpool being least likely

(the figure for Manchester was close to the average).

Although the proportion of vendors with formal educational qualifications has fallen this year, those who do have them are qualified at a higher level than the vendors in 2001 (see Table 7.1b). Vendors in 2002 are less likely to have Level 1 qualifications only, and more likely to be qualified to Levels 2 and 3 than vendors in last year's survey.

**Table 7.1(a): whether vendors have formal educational qualifications by office**

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
qualifications	56%	36%	43%	46%	57%
no qualifications	44%	64%	57%	54%	43%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=125	n=84	n=99	n=308	n=302

The differences between the offices are not statistically significant, but vendors in Manchester are more likely to have Level 1 qualifications

only than vendors in either Leeds or Liverpool, whilst the Liverpool vendors are most likely to be qualified to Levels 3 and 4.

**Table 7.1(b): level of vendors' highest qualification by office**

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
Level 1	27%	26%	46%	33%	55%
Level 2	36%	32%	25%	31%	26%
Level 3	18%	26%	18%	20%	12%
Level 4	9%	16%	4%	9%	7%
occupational only	11%	-	7%	8%	n/a
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=45	n=19	n=28	n=92	n=172

Note: the table only includes vendors with qualifications where the level of qualification is unambiguous (in 2002 some vendors did not identify grades, so the highest level of qualification is unclear). Level 1 is an NVQ or GNVQ level 1 or GCSEs grades D-F; Level 2 is an NVQ or GNVQ level 2 or O levels/GCSEs grades A-C; Level 3 is an NVQ or GNVQ level 3 or A levels; Level 4 is NVQ or GNVQ levels 4-5 or a university degree.

### 7.2 Previous employment

As has been found previously, the majority of vendors (77%) have had a formal paid job other

than selling *The Big Issue in the North*, although this figure is slightly lower than it was in 2001.

Table 7.2: whether vendors have had a formal paid job prior to selling by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
not had a job before	12%	38%	25%	23%	16%
had a job before	88%	62%	75%	77%	84%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=125	n=84	n=99	n=308	n=298

There is a distinct difference between the cities, with vendors in Leeds being much more likely to have worked before.

Vendors in Liverpool are the least likely to have had a job other than selling the magazine, as was the case in both 2000

and 2001 – despite the fact that the figure in Manchester has fallen from 91% to 75% this year.

7.3 Length of time since vendors had a job

More than half of those vendors who have worked previously have not done so within the last three years, following the pattern seen in previous

surveys. Manchester vendors are slightly less likely than vendors in either Leeds or Liverpool to have had a job within the last 12 months,

although overall there is very little difference between the cities in this respect (as is seen in Table 7.3).

Table 7.3: time since vendors' last job finished by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
in last 6 months	6%	8%	1%	5%	6%
6-12 months ago	7%	6%	5%	6%	12%
1-2 years ago	9%	12%	16%	12%	10%
2-3 years ago	19%	19%	18%	19%	18%
more than 3 years ago	58%	56%	60%	58%	55%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=110	n=52	n=74	n=236	n=250

Note: this table only includes vendors who have had a job other then selling *The Big Issue in the North*.

7.4 Types of job vendors have worked in

Those vendors who had worked prior to selling *The Big Issue in the North* were asked to describe the jobs they had done in the past. As Table 7.4 shows, most vendors had previously worked in manual jobs.

Just over a third of vendors overall had jobs classified under 'elementary occupations', which is mainly unskilled manual work. The other job types most frequently described were 'skilled trades occupations'

(such as skilled construction work, mechanics and electrical work) and 'process, plant and machine operatives' (which includes transport and other driving work).

Table 7.4: vendors' previous jobs by Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total
managers + senior officials	2%	-	4%	2%
professional occupations	1%	-	1%	1%
associated professional + technical	4%	4%	4%	4%
administrative + secretarial	3%	-	1%	2%
skilled trades occupations	23%	19%	19%	21%
personal service occupations	3%	2%	4%	3%
sales + customer services	7%	4%	7%	6%
process, plant + machine operatives	16%	6%	12%	12%
elementary occupations	32%	39%	38%	35%
not stated	11%	27%	10%	14%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=110	n=52	n=74	n=236

Note: this table only includes vendors who have had a job other than selling *The Big Issue in the North*. Jobs have been coded according to the *Standard Occupational Classification (2000)* used by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Whilst direct comparisons with last year's survey are not possible, due to the introduction of amended Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes by the ONS, a predominance of manual

occupations amongst vendors' previous job types – either skilled or unskilled – was also seen in 2001.

The figures for each of the three offices are very similar, although

vendors in Liverpool were slightly less likely to have worked in managerial occupations or as process, plant and machine operatives in the past.

7.5 Types of job vendors want to do when they leave  
*The Big Issue in the North*

We also asked vendors what sort of job they wanted to do when they stopped selling *The Big Issue in the North*. Almost a fifth said they were not sure what work they wanted to move into, or that they would be happy with any job at all (see Table 7.5). The types of occupation described by vendors were quite often those in which they had worked in the past, so once again 'skilled trades occupations' were

frequently mentioned. The next highest figure was for jobs in the 'associated professional and technical' category however, due mainly to the number of vendors overall who wanted to work in the information technology field. Furthermore whilst 35% of vendors had worked in 'elementary occupations' in the past, only 10% wanted to do so in the future, reflecting a general desire amongst

vendors to move into more skilled occupations on leaving *The Big Issue in the North*.

Once again there was very little difference between the cities, although vendors in Liverpool were most likely to be uncertain about what job they wanted to do, and vendors in Leeds were more likely to be aiming at the 'skilled trades occupations' than vendors in either Liverpool or Manchester.

Table 7.5: the jobs vendors want to do by Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total
managers + senior officials	2%	-	-	1%
professional occupations	1%	-	5%	2%
associated professional + technical	14%	14%	13%	14%
administrative + secretarial	-	-	1%	<1%
skilled trades occupations	22%	12%	16%	17%
personal service occupations	9%	10%	9%	9%
sales + customer services	4%	4%	3%	4%
process, plant + machine operatives	9%	6%	7%	8%
elementary occupations	11%	11%	9%	10%
training/college course	3%	1%	1%	2%
don't know/not sure/any job	15%	23%	16%	18%
not stated	8%	12%	17%	12%
none/no job	2%	8%	2%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=125	n=84	n=99	n=308

Note: jobs have been coded according to the *Standard Occupational Classification (2000)* used by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).



# 8.0 Selling *The Big Issue* in the North

This section considers how long vendors have been selling *The Big Issue in the North*, and what

sort of impact they think this has had on their self-confidence and motivation to change.

## 8.1 Length of time as a vendor

In May 2000, The Big Issue in the North Trust introduced its Big Futures Programme, which limits vendors to selling the magazine for a maximum of two years while they are offered support in a range of areas (accommodation, health, drug and alcohol use, education and training, employment, and personal development).

The change is reflected in this year's figures for length of time selling more strongly than it

was in 2001. Three quarters (74%) of vendors have been selling *The Big Issue in the North* for 12 months or less, compared to just over half (53%) last year, and there has been a noticeable fall in the proportion of vendors who have been selling the magazine for more than two years.

The results for the three cities are very similar, as Table 8.1 shows, although vendors in Liverpool are slightly more likely

to have been selling the magazine for a shorter period of time (79% have been selling for a year or less, compared to 73% of vendors in Leeds and 72% of vendors in Manchester). A review of the Big Futures Programme in the autumn of 2002 led to some changes in the way we are working with vendors. Whilst there are still time limits on selling the magazine they will now be individually set.

Table 8.1: how long vendors have been selling *The Big Issue in the North* by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
less than 3 months	29%	35%	18%	27%	33%
3-6 months	25%	28%	22%	25%	25%
7-12 months	19%	17%	32%	22%	20%
1-2 years	22%	14%	18%	18%	19%
more than 2 years	5%	6%	11%	7%	28%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=111	n=78	n=85	n=274	n=283

Note: this table excludes vendors who started selling *The Big Issue in the North* during the audit. Separate figures for 'less than 3 months' and '3-6 months' are not available for 2001.

## 8.2 Impact of selling the magazine

We asked vendors what sort of effect selling *The Big Issue in the North* has had on their self-confidence and motivation to change things in their lives (see Table 8.2). The figures are slightly higher than in previous years, and show that almost 90% of vendors overall feel that selling the magazine has helped

to improve both their self-confidence and their motivation. Whilst 1 in 10 vendors say that selling has had no effect in this context, only 3% feel their self-confidence has worsened, and only 2% report that selling *The Big Issue in the North* has had a negative effect on their motivation to change.

Vendors in Leeds are slightly more likely, and vendors in Manchester slightly less likely to report a positive effect on their motivation to change things in their lives, although the differences between the cities are not significant.

Table 8.2: positive effects of selling on self-confidence and motivation by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
self-confidence	88%	87%	85%	87%	72%
motivation to change	93%	86%	82%	88%	80%
	n=111	n=78	n=85	n=274	n=276

Note: this table excludes vendors who started selling *The Big Issue in the North* during the audit.

# 9.0 Vendors' perceptions

We also asked vendors questions about their views of themselves, their future and *The Big Issue in the North*. They were read a number of statements and asked to say how strongly they agreed or disagreed with

these statements. This section explores their responses. As was the case in previous surveys, the majority of vendors want to move on and away from their current situation (see Table 9.1). Fewer than 3%

overall say that they want nothing more from life than selling the magazine. The differences between the offices are not significant, although a lower proportion of vendors in Manchester agreed strongly with this statement.

Table 9.1: "I want more from life than selling *The Big Issue in the North*" by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
strongly agree	63%	59%	48%	57%	56%
agree	31%	35%	38%	35%	41%
neither	5%	4%	9%	6%	2%
disagree	1%	2%	4%	2%	1%
strongly disagree	-	-	1%	<1%	-
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=121	n=83	n=99	n=303	n=302

Vendors who were drug users were asked how they felt about the statement "I want to be drug free" (Table 9.2). Following the pattern seen in previous years, most agreed that they did not want to be using drugs, and as in 2001 vendors in Leeds were more likely than the vendors in Liverpool

or Manchester to say they agreed strongly with the statement.

94% of vendors who felt they currently had problems with drugs, and 92% of vendors who said they had used crack cocaine in the last 4 weeks, agreed that they want to be drug free.

Table 9.2: "I want to be drug free" by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
strongly agree	68%	51%	48%	58%	58%
agree	29%	38%	38%	34%	32%
neither	3%	7%	10%	6%	7%
disagree	-	4%	3%	2%	2%
strongly disagree	-	-	-	-	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=98	n=69	n=58	n=225	n=184

Finally, all vendors were asked how they saw the public's view of the magazine. More than 4 in 5 vendors agreed that the public are generally supportive of *The Big Issue in the North*, as Table 9.3 shows. Vendors in

Leeds were slightly less likely to agree with the statement than those in Liverpool and Manchester, but overall there has been little change in vendors' views of public support since 2001.

Table 9.3: "The public generally support *The Big Issue in the North*" by office

	Leeds	Liverpool	Manchester	2002 total	2001
strongly agree	13%	21%	14%	16%	9%
agree	66%	68%	75%	69%	72%
neither	12%	10%	8%	10%	13%
disagree	8%	1%	3%	5%	4%
strongly disagree	1%	1%	-	1%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=121	n=83	n=99	n=303	n=302

# 10 Methodology

The following section briefly describes how this year's audit

was designed and undertaken, and how the data were analysed.

## 10.1 Process

Building on the experience of previous years, the survey was conducted as part of *The Big Issue in the North's* re-badging process.

In December 2002 we were ready to launch our new automated system for monitoring vendors' progress,

The Big Futures Database. Since this required us to update the information we hold for vendors in each of the cities, the launch of the database offered an ideal opportunity to allocate new badge numbers to active vendors and to administer the audit questionnaire with them at the same time.

## 10.2 Sample

Since the aim was to interview all current vendors, they were only given a new badge once they had been entered onto the database and completed an audit questionnaire (although they were interviewed after being told that

they would be getting a new badge, removing the potential for vendors to exaggerate their current circumstances in order to be re-badged). Vendors were not given a number of free magazines – as they have been in the past –

or any other incentives for taking part in the survey this year.

A total of 308 vendors across the cities were re-badged during the audit period (as shown in Table 10.1 below).

Table 10.1: number of vendors included in the survey by office

	vendors audited in 2002	vendors audited in 2001
Leeds (including Sheffield)	125	120
Liverpool	84	80
Manchester	99	102
Total	308	302

## 10.3 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire was based on those used in previous audits, in order that year-on-year comparisons could be made in most areas. However a small

number of changes were made following consultation with staff, and this year we added questions on the recent health problems experienced by vendors, and the

level of help and/or treatment they had received for these problems. A copy of the full audit questionnaire is included in the Appendix.

## 10.4 Fieldwork

The interviews were carried out with vendors by sales staff and vendor support workers from *The Big Issue in the North* and The Big Life Company. The confidential nature

of the survey was stressed to all participants, and all of the interviews took place in a private space. The survey ran for two and a half weeks between 4 and 20 December 2002.

## 10.5 Data preparation and analysis

The completed questionnaires were input into, and analysed using SPSS v11.5 (which is a statistical computer software package). Data on gender, age, ethnic background, disability or

long-term illness, educational qualifications and previous work experience were exported from the new vendor database into SPSS files and analysed in the same way.

# Appendix

## Confidential questionnaire: Vendor Audit 2002

Every year we carry out a survey like this to tell us who our vendors are and what they think about selling *The Big Issue In The North*. The information you tell me will be treated confidentially and will only be seen by our Research Manager, who will add it to the information collected from all our other vendors to produce a report which will help us to provide you with a better service.

If you are asked a question that you don't want to answer, you do not have to do so, and you don't have to give a reason why.

### Office/location

- ☐ Leeds
- ☐ Liverpool
- ☐ Manchester
- ☐ Sheffield

Vendor reference no:  
New badge no:

### A: Selling *The Big Issue In The North*

**1: When did you first start to sell *The Big Issue* (here or elsewhere)?**

- ☐ today if today, go to question 5
- ☐ 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: How long have you been selling *The Big Issue In The North* for (this time around if you've had more than one spell selling)?**

- ☐ less than 3 months
- ☐ 3 - 6 months
- ☐ 7 - 12 months
- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ more than 2 years

**3: What effect has selling *The Big Issue In The North* had on your self-confidence?**

- ☐ increased it a lot
- ☐ increased it a bit
- ☐ had no effect
- ☐ made it a bit worse
- ☐ made it a lot worse

**4: What effect has selling *The Big Issue In The North* had on your motivation to change things in your life?**

- ☐ increased it a lot
- ☐ increased it a bit
- ☐ had no effect
- ☐ made it a bit worse
- ☐ made it a lot worse

### B: Accommodation

**5: Where did you sleep last night?**

- ☐ slept rough
- ☐ B&B
- ☐ own tenancy if own tenancy, go to question 7
- ☐ squat
- ☐ hostel
- ☐ night shelter
- ☐ family/friend's place
- ☐ other where? \_\_\_\_\_

**6: How long have you been homeless or experienced unsettled housing (I'd like to know the answer for this time around if you've had more than one spell of being homeless)?**

- ☐ less than 3 months
- ☐ 3-6 months
- ☐ 7-12 months
- ☐ between 1 and 2 years
- ☐ between 2 and 3 years
- ☐ between 3 and 5 years
- ☐ between 5 and 10 years
- ☐ more than 10 years

**7: 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
- ☐ over 50

**8: How did you first become homeless? (please tell me the event or process e.g. I was kicked out by my parents, not the underlying reason e.g. I was using drugs). Tick one only.**

- ☐ left care
- ☐ split up with partner
- ☐ kicked out by parents
- ☐ left parents home due to problems
- ☐ evicted
- ☐ left prison
- ☐ left the armed forces
- ☐ other what? \_\_\_\_\_

**9: Have you slept rough at any time in the last year? By sleeping rough I mean sleeping on the streets, in a car or anywhere else that isn't normally used for sleeping.**

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no if no, go to question 13

**10: Thinking about the last time that you slept rough, how many consecutive nights did you sleep rough for?**

- ☐ for 1 night only
- ☐ 2-7 nights
- ☐ 8-14 nights
- ☐ 15-30 nights
- ☐ more than 1 month to 2 months
- ☐ more than 2 months to 6 months
- ☐ more than 6 months to 1 year
- ☐ more than 1 year to 2 years
- ☐ more than 2 years to 3 years
- ☐ more than 3 years to 5 years
- ☐ more than 5 years to 10 years
- ☐ more than 10 years

**11: When you last slept rough, did you try to get a place in a hostel or a night shelter?**

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

**12: What was the main reason you slept rough rather than getting a place in a hostel or a night shelter? Tick one only.**

- ☐ hostels all full up
- ☐ didn't know where to look
- ☐ don't like hostels
- ☐ barred from hostels
- ☐ had no ID
- ☐ own a pet
- ☐ part of a couple
- ☐ like to sleep rough
- ☐ other what? \_\_\_\_\_

**13: Have you heard about or been given any information about the new Homelessness Act that came into effect earlier this year?**

- ☐ yes, got information about it
- ☐ yes, heard about it
- ☐ no, neither

**14: Before you became homeless, were you ever in care?**

- ☐ yes
- ☐ no

### C: Employment

If the vendor has had a formal paid job in the past, go to question 15; if not go to question 16

**15: When you worked prior to selling *The Big Issue In The North*, what was your job title? Please say what you actually did, not who you worked for or where you worked e.g. 'a teacher' not 'in a school'.**

**16: What job do you want to do when you stop selling *The Big Issue In The North*? Again please say what you want to do, not who you want to work for or where you want to work e.g. 'a mechanic' not 'in a garage'.**



D: Problems experienced

17: Here are some areas of life that some people might have problems with. Are you having problems with any of these areas at the moment? Tick all that apply.

- accommodation
- employment
- education/training
- physical health
- mental health
- money
- committing crime
- personal safety
- eating properly
- drugs if yes, go to question 18, otherwise go to question 19
- alcohol if yes, go to question 18, otherwise go to question 19
- other areas what area/s?

E: Drug and alcohol use

18: When did your drug or alcohol use first become a problem for you, before you became homeless or afterwards?

- before
- afterwards

N.B. The following questions are for all vendors

19: Have you used crack cocaine (base, freebase, gravel, rock, stones, wash) in the last 4 weeks?

- yes
- no

20: Has anybody (other than a drug user) ever given you any information or advice about crack use?

- yes
- no

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

- yes
- needle exchange only
- no

F: Health

22: Are you registered with a GP?

- yes
- no
- don't know

23: Are you registered with a dentist?

- yes
- no
- don't know

24: Which of these health problems have you had in the last 6 months? Tick all that apply. For each problem you've had, I'd like to know if you received any help from a health-care worker (e.g. doctor, dentist, nurse). Tick if help was received.

- |   |                  |          |
|---|------------------|----------|
| asthma                                      | had this problem | had help |
| backache                                    | had this problem | had help |
| chest/breathing problems                    | had this problem | had help |
| dental/teeth problems                       | had this problem | had help |
| foot problems                               | had this problem | had help |
| eye problems                                | had this problem | had help |
| headaches                                   | had this problem | had help |
| skin problems (e.g. eczema)                 | had this problem | had help |
| TB (tuberculosis)                           | had this problem | had help |
| epilepsy                                    | had this problem | had help |
| muscular/skeletal problems (e.g. arthritis) | had this problem | had help |
| diarrhoea and vomiting                      | had this problem | had help |
| diabetes                                    | had this problem | had help |
| sexually transmitted disease                | had this problem | had help |
| feeling low all the time                    | had this problem | had help |
| other mental health issues                  | had this problem | had help |
| other                                       | had this problem | had help |

25: I don't want to know why, but are you seeing anybody at the moment about any health problem? I mean someone like your GP, a hospital, a counsellor or any other health worker.

- yes
- no

G: General information

26: Do you have any of the following documents? Tick all those that they still have now, not those that they once had.

- birth certificate
- passport
- driving licence

27: Do you have an account with any of the following? Tick all that apply.

- bank
- building society
- post office
- credit union

Finally I'm going to read you a few statements and I want you to say how you feel about them.

28: The public generally support The Big Issue In The North

- strongly agree
- agree
- neither
- disagree
- strongly disagree

29: (Ask only if a drug user) I want to be drug free

- strongly agree
- agree
- neither
- disagree
- strongly disagree

30: I want more from life than selling The Big Issue In The North

- 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.