

# FRIENDS OF BIG ISSUE NORTH

## Howard's place to call home

**Just before Christmas, Howard, who sells Big Issue North in Leeds, was seriously attacked in the hallway of his bedsit by someone trying to get through the front door, and ended up in hospital.**

Now, however, he is preparing to move into a new home, supported by Big Issue North staff. The one-bed council property is currently unfurnished, but staff are working with other local organisations to help him to make it into a home.

"I'm getting there slowly but surely," he said. "I can't wait to get in here properly. I'm over the moon about it."

Like many of our vendors, Howard has faced many tough times in his life. "I had a lot of difficulties as a child because I have learning difficulties and I suffer with depression," he said. "When I was growing up, I got picked on a hell of a lot. There wasn't much known about learning difficulties back when I was a kid. It's the same with depression. Until recently, we didn't know a lot about that."

Howard has always been a hard worker. As a young man, he did a Youth Training Scheme in woodworking and worked in a factory. His last job before he sold Big Issue North was selling the Yorkshire Evening Post on the streets. When the paper stopped using street vendors, the move to selling the magazine felt right for him.

With the help of the Big Issue North Trust, Howard has recently completed a course of warehouse training, and is looking to the future. "I'm happier now than when I first started selling the magazine," he said. "Then I was at a low point in my life and I feel like a lot of things have changed

for me since then. I've not beaten my depression – I still struggle with it. But I'm in a more positive place now."

He is also well-loved in his local community. A member of Hunslet Carr Sports and Social Club for over a decade, he's served on the club committee for the last few years, and is now vice president. "He's very polite and you never hear him swear," said club member Anne Walker. "He helps out a lot here, running this and running that. He's a good lad."

To everyone who knows him, securing a place to call his own could not be more deserved.

Howard is a prolific poet, and wrote a new poem to celebrate moving into his new property:

### A Place I Call Home

I have longed for a place  
I can call home  
A place of my own  
A place with my own  
Front door and a roof  
A place I can lay  
My head down at night  
A place where I am  
Happy and settled  
It's something I've  
Longed for for an age  
Something I never thought  
I would have at all  
But now at long last  
The time has come  
For me to have  
A place I call home  
A place where I am  
Happy and settled at last  
This place I call home

**You can read more about Howard in the second issue of our new quarterly subscription magazine, The New Issue. Flick to page 3 to find out more.**



Last year, we supported vendors with housing issues 127 times. This year, we want to do even more, but we can't do it without your support.

To make a donation, please text BINORTH to 70970 to give £5, fill in the form within this newsletter, or visit [www.justgiving.com/bigissuenorth](http://www.justgiving.com/bigissuenorth).

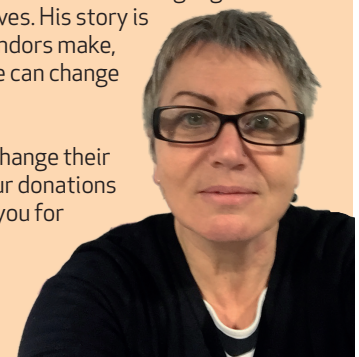
### Letter from Fay

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter!

Stories like Howard's show the difference that selling Big Issue North can make to people's lives. His story is typical of the positive steps our vendors make, and of the way selling the magazine can change people's lives for the better.

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

**Fay Selvan,  
Big Issue North Trustee**



# BIG ISSUE NORTH VENDORS BATTLE BARRIERS TO WORK

**How many times have you applied for a job and been asked for proof of address, ID, bank statements, qualifications and your work history? For our vendors, each of these criteria could be a barrier to moving on from Big Issue North.**

A third of our vendors do not currently have a permanent address, over half have no form of ID, and just under a quarter have no form of bank account. What's more, only a quarter hold formal qualifications, and most have no previous employment experience. The majority of those vendors who have worked before last worked over three years ago, leaving a gap on their CV that can lead many employers to disregard applications.

For Patrick, who sells Big Issue North in Manchester, this is a significant barrier. "I would like to get a full time job," he said. "I've done a lot of care and support work in the past. I've done pub and bar work as well. I guess what's stopping me is having been homeless and things like that."

In some cases, losing work can result from just one incident outside of someone's control. "I was a kitchen porter," Nikolay, who also sells in Manchester, told us. "It was a good job because it came with accommodation in a caravan and it was just a five minute walk to the restaurant so I didn't need

a car or anything. The money was okay. When that job finished I went back to Bulgaria for a month and then I came back to Manchester. I was hoping to get another kitchen porter job in the city but my flight was delayed and I missed an interview and I had no work and nowhere to live."

We also have some vendors whose backgrounds might surprise you. "I could do with some help getting back to university," said Nick, pictured, who sells Big Issue North in Sheffield. "I'd like to do town planning. I know lots about trees and stuff. I used to inspect trees for a living and I've got a Masters in forestry and a degree in land management. I would like to get a proper job again one day."

Despite his impressive qualifications, Nick found himself out of work due to traumatic personal circumstances. "I lost a child when I was in my twenties. That caused the first drug problem. I got over that, got away from it, but then I got mixed up in gangs and I was nearly killed," he explained. "Rehab is there to reintroduce you to life, to give you confidence. If you talk to users and find out what has happened to them – the things that they have been through – those things knock the hell out of you. Rehab is also about structuring your life again."



Almost half of our vendors see themselves moving on from selling Big Issue North, but many need support in order to do so. With your help, we can ensure that all of our vendors are able to reach their full potential, and lead the lives they want and deserve.

Your generosity allows us to support vendors to access life-changing education to achieve their full potential, and to provide support while they're on their way. To make a donation, text BINORTH to 70970 to give £5, call 0161 848 2420 to donate by credit or debit card or to set up a standing order, or visit [www.justgiving.com/BigIssueNorth](http://www.justgiving.com/BigIssueNorth)



## LEARNING BY HEART

**Last month, our Manchester office received a visit from Michael Thompson, a first responder with the North West Ambulance Service, who provides training on administering CPR, including how to use a defibrillator.**

Four vendors took part, learning the skills to save a life. As they found out,

if CPR is administered within 3 minutes of someone suffering a cardiac arrest, their chance of survival is high. As our vendors spend much of their time working on streets in towns and cities across the north, it's likely that they could be the first person on the scene of an accident, and having the knowledge of how to respond could be the difference

between life and death.

As well as learning a vital skill that will make them even more valuable to their local communities, the vendors who took part each received a certificate. Opportunities like this can make an enormous difference to their ability to move on from selling Big Issue North when the time is right.

We hope to be able to offer the opportunity again in Manchester soon, as well as across our offices in Liverpool, Leeds and Sheffield. In fact, Michael was so impressed with how well the vendors picked up what he taught them that he invited them back to demonstrate what they learned to others.

We're enormously proud of our vendors for taking valuable working time out of their days to learn such an important skill – and for learning it so quickly!

If you own or work for an organisation that offers training that you think could be valuable to our vendors, please email [fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com](mailto:fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com), or call 0161 848 2430.



# NO CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

In April 2013, Universal Credit was introduced in four postcodes in the North West, replacing six previous benefits – Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, and Working Tax Credit. Since then, it has been gradually rolled out across the country, and is set to have replaced all other benefits across the country by the end of 2023.

While the Department for Work and Pensions claim that the single, online benefit system makes applications easier for clients, Universal Credit has come under significant criticism from various groups. The Trussell Trust, who run more than 1,200 foodbanks across the UK, reported last year that foodbanks see a 52% increase in demand in areas where Universal Credit has been rolled out for a period of 12 months.

If you have watched the recent BBC documentary Universal Credit: Inside the Welfare State, you will have seen some of the struggles experienced by recipients –

a man struggles to cope with being made homeless, a single mother has to feed and clothe herself and her two children on just £138 a month, and a young survivor of sexual assault attempts to support herself on a zero hours contract – issues that affect many of our vendors. Payments are also made in arrears, and although an advance is available to new recipients, this must be paid back over a 12 month period, which can lead to struggles with debt. If recipients are able to get into work, their benefits are reduced significantly – another barrier to moving on.

Ian, who sells Big Issue North in Wetherby, told us that he was concerned about losing his Working Tax Credit – something vendors, who are legally recognised as self-employed, were formerly eligible for. “I currently get them and they are worth £53 a week,” he said, “but they are getting replaced by Universal Credit. Losing that money would cripple me. It's a big worry. If I have a bad week with low sales, I won't be able to cope. This could affect a lot of

people, not just vendors.”

Through the previous housing benefit system, many vendors had their rent paid directly to housing associations or landlords. Under Universal Credit, this will change, and they will need to budget for this themselves.

Every time you buy a copy of Big Issue North, you are helping a vendor to stay afloat, but when times are tough, Big Issue North Trust is on hand to provide budgeting and crisis support.

Your generosity helps us to give vendors like Ian the support they need when times get tough. Last year, we provided financial support to vendors 213 times, and crisis support 1,521 times.

To make a donation, please text BINORTH to 70970 to give £5, fill in the form within this newsletter, or visit [www.justgiving.com/bigissuenorth](http://www.justgiving.com/bigissuenorth).

## THE NEW ISSUE: ISSUE TWO

The second issue of The New Issue, our new quarterly magazine, is on its way out to subscribers.

The New Issue contains real stories – beautifully told. It offers stunning photography combined with high-quality independent writing; covering everything from changing landscapes and social issues, to lifestyle and fiction. Even though it's sold to subscribers, it's still doing good. All proceeds go to Big Issue North Trust, supporting vendors to achieve their goals.

In this issue, we have the exuberant competitors of the British relay fell running championships, and the young grime artists of Blackpool moving on from dissing each other to mutual support.

With the new government in its infancy, we go to Workington, whose men, if not perhaps its women, took on huge significance in the general election.



There's a glimpse inside the vehicles of a New Age Travellers camp and confirmation, through a group of refugees, that one of humanity's common denominators is the love of eating things in some sort of pastry filling.

Benjamin Myers, the award-winning novelist, has written a short story for us that isn't as unsettling as the paintings of Paula Rego, who we interview.

Prisoners are learning to play Indonesian gamelan music – bringing their families together – and scientists are making breakthroughs in photosynthesis.

The New Issue costs £40 for an annual subscription. To subscribe to The New Issue, or to buy one copy to try it out, visit [www.newissue.co.uk](http://www.newissue.co.uk)

## AROUND THE REGIONS



In **MANCHESTER**, we have continued to work alongside Greater Manchester Police and a range of other partners (pictured above) to offer people who are currently begging the opportunity to change their life for good. So far, around fifty people have accepted temporary badges to try out selling the magazine, and have also had the opportunity to find out more about the support we can provide.

In **LIVERPOOL**, staff have been working with Bosco House, a residential hostel, to help homeless vendors to get off the streets while they work to turn their lives around. As well as providing a warm bed and a safe place to stay, Bosco House provides support to guests struggling with substance misuse, or with mental illness.

In **LEEDS**, Big Issue North has linked up with Migration Yorkshire to help Roma vendors to prepare for Brexit. Staff have also been working more closely with Simon on the Streets, who provide frontline practical and emotional support to people living on the streets.

In **SHEFFIELD**, an outreach worker has been helping people currently begging to transition into selling the magazine, the first step in their journey to moving into their own home. Big Issue North has also begun working with the South Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit, working together to reduce crime and exploitation on South Yorkshire's streets.

# STEFAN'S HOME RUN

When we last wrote to you, we told you about our Manchester vendor, Stefan, who was preparing to run the Mast 10k in Bolton in January.

He completed the run in an hour and 47 minutes, and thanks to your support, he raised an incredible £350, all of which will go back into the Big Issue North Trust, helping vendors like him to change their lives for good.

It definitely isn't in Stefan's nature to take a break though – he is now gearing up to run

the Manchester Marathon. With little more than a month to go, he's already raised £325 of his £500 target, but there's still plenty of time to chip in on his Justgiving page!

Stefan is also in the process of applying for permanent residence, having lived in the UK for the past five years. "I am so thankful that the English people have adopted me," he said. "Thank you to my customers! Thank you to my supporters!"

With his tenacity and work ethic, we think England is very lucky to have him.



## How to donate

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

To set up a standing order to support our vendors please fill in the form enclosed with the newsletter or call 0161 848 2420.



Text BINORTH to 70970 to give £5 or donate online at [justgiving.com/bigissuenorth](https://justgiving.com/bigissuenorth)



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



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



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

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

## DO SOMETHING BIG TODAY

While we always greatly appreciate donations, there are many ways you can support our vendors.

- 1. Volunteer your time.** We are currently in the process of recruiting volunteers. We will soon have a wide range of volunteering opportunities available, ranging from outreach at our vendors' pitches to raising awareness about our organisation among homeless and vulnerably housed people to support at events and festivals to offering skills training. If you are interested in getting involved, please get in touch by emailing [fundraising@bigissuenorth.com](mailto:fundraising@bigissuenorth.com) or phoning us on 0161 848 2430.
- 2. Donate goods.** Many of the comforts we take for granted, such as warm clothing, toiletries and furniture, are an unattainable luxury for our vendors. If you would like to help to make life easier for our vendors, please visit [bigissuenorth.com/donations](https://bigissuenorth.com/donations) to find out what items are needed and how you can donate them.
- 3. Raise sponsorship.** Are you thinking of doing a sponsored activity in 2020? If so, and you would like your efforts to raise vital funds to help our vendors to change their lives, we will do all we can to support you. For more information, get in touch by emailing us at [fundraising@bigissuenorth.com](mailto:fundraising@bigissuenorth.com), or phoning us on 0161 848 2430.
- 4. Buy from our shop.** Every week, after each issue is no longer being sold on the street by our vendors, it goes onto our online shop. We also sell a wide range of merchandise, from concert posters and t-shirts to jewellery and tote bags. To browse the selection of goods we have on offer, go to [shop.bigissuenorth.com/products](https://shop.bigissuenorth.com/products)
- 5. Select Big Issue North as your charity of choice on Amazon Smile.** Every time you make a purchase, we will receive 0.5% of the cost – and 2% on Black Friday! To do this, go to [smile.amazon.co.uk](https://smile.amazon.co.uk) and search for 'Big Issue North Trust'

### THE TRUSTEES

Big Issue North Trust is supported by the Zochonis Charitable Foundation  
The Trustees of The Big Issue North Trust are: Fay Selvan • Edna Robinson • Mark Fitzgibbon • Safina Islam

The Big Issue in the North Trust is a Big Life charity (Registered Charity No. 1056041)  
[www.bigissuenorth.com](https://www.bigissuenorth.com)

      
**@bigissuenorth**