

FRIENDS OF BIG ISSUE NORTH

A whole new world

On 23 March, shortly after we last wrote to you, we pulled Big Issue North from the streets for the first time in our 28 year history for the safety of our vendors and customers.

We immediately set up a hardship fund to provide financial support to our vendors while they were unable to work, covering costs of living from rent and bills to essential shopping and transport. "I was living off my magazine income before the lockdown," Piero, who sells the magazine in West Kirkby, told us. "I didn't claim benefits while I sold it. I have had some money from the vendor crisis fund and Big Issue North staff have helped me get my pension credits sorted now as well. And I have had many people looking after me. I have had envelopes through the door with money in from people, Morrisons has been sending me food parcels and the staff made a collection for me. I'm not swimming in money but I feel luckier than many people. But I suppose I made my own luck. All that time selling the magazine outside Morrisons, I never asked anyone for anything and I still haven't asked anyone for anything."

We also had to find new ways of selling the magazine. As you know, our vendors are self-employed, buying magazines from our distribution offices for £1.50 each before selling them on for £3. Vendors being unable to sell therefore meant a loss of almost £15,000 per week for us and for vendors. To mitigate these costs, we sent Big Issue North to supermarkets for the first time, with copies going on sale in Sainsbury's, McColl's, Co-Op, Asda, One Stop, Morrisons, Waitrose and Booths stores across the north. We also launched a digital version of the magazine, which is available at issuu.com/bigissuenorth. Half of our proceeds from in store and digital purchases went directly to our hardship fund, with the rest covering our operational costs, allowing us to continue to be there for our vendors during and after lockdown.

With lockdown gradually being lifted, though, we knew that our vendors would be going back to work in a very different world to the one they knew. This meant



that it was up to us to ensure that they were as safe as possible when they returned to the streets. We put out a call for donations of visors and reusable face masks from supporters with 3D printers or sewing skills and were overwhelmed by the positive response. The challenge remained, however, of how our vendors could sell. Prior to lockdown, only a few of our vendors had the means to accept contactless payments, but with cash carrying germs and requiring close contact to be passed from one person to another, we realised this had to change.

We have teamed up with SumUp to supply each of our vendors with a contactless machine, accepting payments by credit card, debit card, Apple Pay and Google Pay. At the cost of £100 each, and with around 350 vendors, this was an expensive purchase, but we hope that our vendors will reap the benefits in the months and years to come, allowing them to thrive in our increasingly cashless society.

In order for vendors to accept contactless payments, they also need a bank account, which almost a quarter of our vendors did not previously have. In order to open a bank account, vendors need proof of identity, which

many did not have, so we've ordered birth certificates at the cost of £11 each for those who needed them, and our frontline staff have been working hard to help everyone who didn't already have one to open an account.

At present, only our vendors who are not shielding and do not live with anyone who is will be returning to work, and they will only be doing so on pitches where social distancing can be maintained. Future donations to our hardship fund will therefore be split between providing hand sanitiser, PPE and SumUp machines to our vendors who can return to work, and continuing to provide financial aid to those who can't for as long as they need it. Magazines will also continue to be available in stores and online during a transitional period so that customers whose local vendors has not yet returned to work can continue to support the magazine.

We would like to thank everyone who has supported us through this immensely difficult time. It has made an enormous difference to our vendors and staff, and shows that we could not do what we do without your support. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you.

If you would like to make a donation to our hardship fund for our vendors who cannot return to work, please text **HARDSHIP** to 70970 to give £5, or go to easydonate.org/HARDSHIP to give an amount of your choosing.

BUILDING A NEW FUTURE

In 2002, Charlie arrived in Manchester after some time spent in prison in North Wales. Wanting a fresh start and determined to turn his life around, he visited our Manchester office and became a vendor, and he hasn't looked back since. "I haven't been to jail again since," he told us. "If it weren't for Big Issue North, a hundred per cent I would've been back inside."

Charlie is one of many people who have made positive changes to their life after becoming a Big Issue North vendor. Last year, our vendor audit found that one in six of our vendors were involved in criminal activity before they began selling the magazine, and one in four previously begged. Since they have been selling, however, all of those vendors who had committed crimes say their involvement in criminal activity has ceased or decreased, and almost 70% of our vendors who previously begged saying that their begging has reduced. This is an amazing achievement that shows some of the many ways selling Big Issue North benefits our vendors on top of allowing them to earn an income.

Since becoming a vendor, Charlie has also taken steps to take his life in a whole new direction. "I put myself through college about three years ago," he said. "I studied plastering at Stockport College at 47 years of age." However, his journey

hasn't always been a smooth one. "At that time, I was drinking like a lunatic, taking drugs," he explained. "I managed to get my City & Guilds qualification, but I really, really struggled when I first came out of college to get any kind of work, and that was because of my behaviour, my drinking and everything."

By the beginning of the year, though, he had worked hard to beat his reliance on alcohol, and was ready to try again. In March, armed with a toolkit purchased for him by the Manchester office, he got a job with a building firm in Manchester, and his dreams finally seemed to be coming true. Just three weeks into his new job, however, his plans were dashed when lockdown measures were announced throughout the UK. "It's been really tough," he told us. "This time round, I got a job and thought 'brilliant,' and now this."

Because Charlie was employed through an agency, he was not eligible for the furlough scheme, but the Manchester office were on hand to step in. "I know a lot of the lads who sell Big Issue North, and another vendor made me aware that the staff might be able to help in these difficult times, so I rang up the office," he said. "They've helped me massively. I've got a phone bill I've got to pay, I've got a computer bill I've got to pay, I've got my lights I need to pay for, and rent. I need my phone and computer now more than

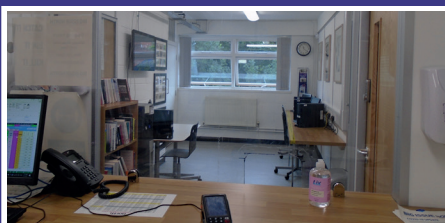


ever. They're not state of the art but they get me work. The support I've had from the office has just been really helpful."

When lockdown ends, Charlie is planning to work towards getting back to work as a plasterer, and getting a driving license to open up more work opportunities for himself. He's come a long way since 2003, and we couldn't be prouder of him.

Your generosity allows us to support vendors like Charlie to access life-changing education and resources 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

AROUND THE REGIONS



In **MANCHESTER, LIVERPOOL, SHEFFIELD AND HULL**, our offices have undergone a redesign to enable staff and vendors to return to them safely. We have installed Perspex screens around our desks and installed contactless card readers, allowing vendors to buy their magazines without the risk of cross contamination between vendors or between vendors and staff.

In **SHEFFIELD**, our staff faced additional challenges after the Cathedral Archer Project, where our Sheffield office is based, was set on fire by an arsonist in mid-May. Staff and volunteers are working hard to repair the damage, but this has cost vital funds that should have gone towards helping our vendors and other vulnerable people. To make a donation towards the repairs, please go to justgiving.com/campaign/fireappeal2020

FEELING CRAFTY?

In these difficult times, we have had to find innovative ways of supporting our vendors.

Our friends at the Greek street paper Shedia avoid waste by upcycling unsold copies into jewellery and homeware. They have been kind enough to share some with us, which you can buy from our online shop, shop.bigissuenorth.com. Inspired by their creativity, we have decided to launch our own range, reducing waste and generating more funds for our vendors.

This is where you come in! We are looking for volunteers to create items such as bracelets, bangles, necklaces and coasters from old copies of Big Issue North. We've put together a simple guide that you can use to get crafty – email us at the address below for more info!

If you're a dab hand at arts and crafts, you are also very welcome to design your own pieces!



Finished items can be sent to the following address:

**Big Issue North
463 Stretford Road
Manchester
M16 9AB**

We can't wait to see what you make!

For the guide, or for magazines to work with, send us an email at fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com with your address and how many issues you'd like, and we'll get them sent out to you.

COMMUNITY EFFORTS

Coronavirus has been the greatest challenge we have ever faced, but it has also provided the greatest encouragement.

Since the middle of March, we have received over 850 donations to our hardship fund, three volunteers came into our office to help us to prepare PPE, and countless others have helped from home, whether sending us face masks or visors, crafting products for our online shop, or helping us to grow our online presence. We also received countless messages from members of the public concerned for the wellbeing of their local vendor. While the pandemic has emphasised how vulnerable many of our vendors are, it has also emphasised how important a role they play in their local communities, and how many friends they have.

We also received fantastic support from various organisations. During lockdown, the British Red Cross ran a mask-sewing project with refugees and asylum seekers. They very kindly chose Big Issue North as the beneficiaries of this project, sending us boxes of beautiful hand-sewn face masks to keep our vendors safe. We also received a package of branded masks from Mancmade Clothing, whose ongoing efforts for us you can read more about on page 4. Fletcher Moss Rangers FC also made an incredibly kind donation of sixty bags of sleeping mats, socks, gloves, hats and toiletries, helping to keep our vendors – and our homeless vendors in particular – comfortable, clean and warm.

For the past six months, we have also been working with The Hope Revolution, a website and app that allows people to buy items needed by local charities, which are then sent directly to them. We



have received many much-needed items through their platform, from biscuits and teabags to toiletries and underwear to thick waterproof coats and sleeping bags. With their finger to the pulse, the onset of lockdown saw them launching a PPE shop to allow charity staff and clients to keep themselves safe. So far, we have received five bundles of PPE, which has made an enormous difference to facilitating our return to work.

We would like to say an enormous thank you to these incredible organisations for supporting our work during these incredibly difficult times.

If you would like to donate PPE through the Hope Revolution, go to www.hope-revolution.org/ppe-shop and select the products you'd like to donate, then click Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds or Sheffield from the dropdown menu under 'City'.

THE BIG BUSK AT HOME

When Big Issue North's deputy editor Antonia Charlesworth interviewed Blackpool singer-songwriter Karima Francis, she was not expecting to find a way to ease Big Issue North Trust's funding crisis.

Taking a detour from discussing her musical work to quiz us about the current situation for our vendors Francis wasted no time in stepping in to offer her support with the organisation of a livestreamed music festival. At this time of year, the fundraising team would normally be taking to the road with the Big Busk, a touring musical festival. With lockdown meaning that was off the cards a new idea was born: the Big Busk at Home.

"When I found out that Big Issue North is a smaller organisation that relies on individual donations and the sale of the magazine, I wanted to help," Karima said. "The things that Big Issue North do to help people get back on track, it's not just about giving people a platform to work and setting them up with bank accounts. They will find housing for people; there are a lot of vendors who come from Eastern Europe who don't have any education and they'll help them get into education and get back on track. Everything they do on such a small amount, it's kind of mindblowing."

Streaming to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, over ten hours



of fantastic music were viewed by people from Manchester to Minnesota. Joining Karima were 17 fantastic acts: Heir, Jekyll, Natalie McCool, Eevah, Toria Wooff, Lucy Feliz, Beans on Toast, Ian Prowse, Ren Harvieu, Self Esteem, The Elephant Trees, The Ghost of Helags, KOYO, Emily Barker and Hana Brooks. Bringing events to a close was a vibrant headline set from Everything Everything and a DJ set from Clint Boon, who showcased some of Manchester's finest musical exports with a charming and funny personal touch.

"Big Issue North has always been really good to us, and obviously we love what they're about," Jeremy from Everything Everything told Karima. "Actually, it's a kind of hidden story – that the vendors are suffering because there are fewer people on the street, and because of living conditions they may be more susceptible to the virus itself, so when that became apparent, we wanted to do what we could to support it."

Throughout the day, two things shone through about every artists: firstly that, performing from their living rooms without a crew on hand to perfect their sound yet still sounding fantastic, these artists are all incredibly talented, and secondly that they genuinely cared about the cause they'd set aside their time to support. Our vendors, it seems, have friends in high places.

The Big Busk at Home was a roaring success. As with previous Big Busk events, the festival was free to attend, but throughout the day, Karima encouraged viewers to make a donation, advocating the cause with passionate enthusiasm. By the end of the day 87 attendees made contributions totalling a fantastic £631.25. As the online nature of the event meant that it had no costs attached, all of this money will go directly to our vendors – providing contactless payment devices and PPE to those who can return to work and financial aid to those who are facing the daunting prospect of more weeks or months trapped indoors.

We would like to say an enormous thank you to Karima, to all of our fantastic acts, and to everyone who came along and showed their support. You made an enormous difference to our vendors, and we are incredibly grateful.

If you would like to make a contribution to these efforts, there is still time to do so – just text 70201 to give £1, 70331 to give £3, 70970 to give £5 or 70191 to give £10.

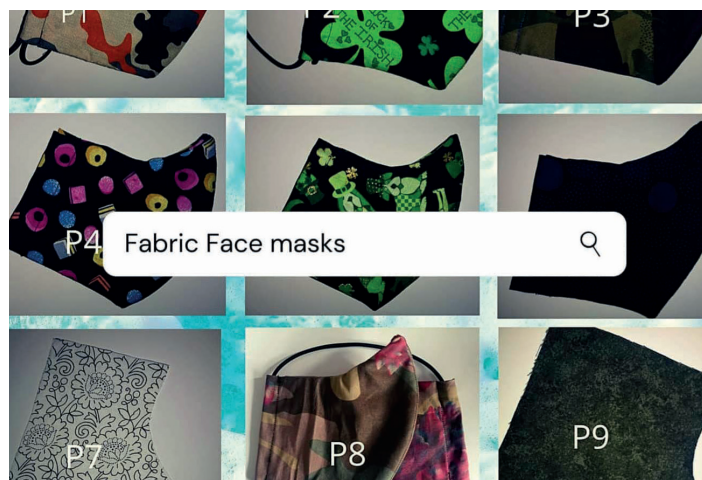
MASKS FOR CHANGE

If you're looking for a mask for yourself or a loved one, why not buy one from MancMade Clothing?

Masks come in six sizes, including for children, and you can pick the design. Made from washable cotton, they are environmentally friendly, and they are designed to fit over a medical mask or to insert a filter, keeping you and those around you safe in style.

As well as supporting a small northern business, you'll also be helping our vendors, with £1 from each sale going to our vendor hardship fund!

To buy yours, go to [etsy.com](https://www.etsy.com) and search for MancMade Clothing.



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://www.justgiving.com/bigissuenorth)



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



For more ways to raise funds for us please contact fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com



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

Go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk today!

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@bigissueinthenorth.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://www.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@bigissueinthenorth.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 homeware to. To browse the selection of goods we have on offer, go to 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 and search for 'Big Issue North Trust'

THE TRUSTEES

Big Issue North Trust is supported by the Zochonis Charitable Foundation
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The Big Issue in the North Trust is a Big Life charity (Registered Charity No. 1056041)
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