

FRIENDS OF BIG ISSUE NORTH

WINTER 2020

BIG ISSUE NORTH VENDORS STRUGGLE THROUGH SECOND ENGLISH LOCKDOWN

As England entered a second lockdown on 5th November, our vendors faced a dire predicament: they were once again unable to sell Big Issue North. Ineligible for furlough and unable to work from home – something many of our vendors do not have – our vendors found themselves once more without their desperately-needed source of income.

In our last newsletter, we wrote to you about Cristina, who was thrilled to get back to work after the last lockdown so that she could return to earning an income to support her five children. For her, like many vendors, the news of the second lockdown was crushing.

“Everything is shut and people are not coming out, because the Coronavirus is everywhere in Liverpool,” she told the BBC in a broadcast on North West Today. For her, selling Big Issue North is not just a means of earning money, but also a vital source of social interaction. Without it, she struggled with isolation and loneliness. “Now I don’t have any work,” she added. “I don’t have anything. I don’t know what to do for my kids.” The flexibility of being a self-employed vendor usually helps Cristina to balance her work with her childcare duties, but during lockdown, struggling to provide for her family has been a constant worry.

Alexandru, who sells Big Issue North in Southport, was also interviewed. “For two months, I’ve not been able to pay my rent,” he explained. “Before lockdown it was better, but now it’s very, very difficult – not just for me, for everyone.” While a third of our vendors are currently homeless, Alexandru is one of the two thirds of our vendors who are vulnerably housed. This means that, while they have a roof over their head, they are at a high risk of homelessness. They often struggle to access mainstream employment for multiple reasons, such as language barriers, a lack of qualifications or previous experience, or struggles with their mental or physical health. Selling Big Issue North helps vulnerably housed people to keep up with their rent, but when they are unable to work, their risk of homelessness can become even greater.

Colin, who sells outside Home and 70



Photo: Rebecca Lupton

Oxford Road in Manchester, has had a particularly tough year. He has COPD – a lung disease that makes him particularly vulnerable to the horrors of COVID – and has had to spend both lockdowns in total isolation. He’s eager to get back on his pitch because “it keeps him occupied” and he needs the money. Many of his customers at Home have also got orders in with him for the 2021 Big Issue North calendar. He’s on the cover, standing alongside Manchester chef Mary-Ellen McTague. The calendar features recipes written by McTague, based on vendors’ favourite dishes, and Colin was invited into the kitchen to help create his chosen meal, spaghetti bolognese.

“I worry about the future,” he said. “I made a bit of money in between the two lockdowns, but I’ve had bills to pay so it’s all gone. I’m just not sure what’s going to happen next.”

During November, we were completely reliant on the help of supporters like you to get our vendors through this immensely difficult time, and just like before, we were overwhelmed with the outpouring of generosity we received. Over a thousand people have now donated to our hardship fund, from which we paid out over £500 a day to

ensure that our vendors had everything they needed to survive during lockdown, from covering the cost of rent and bills to essential shopping and transport. Readers have also continued to support the magazine, buying issues from Sainsbury’s, Co-Op, McColl’s and Booths or online at issuu.com/bigissuenorth, as well as getting some Christmas shopping done at our online shop, bigissuenorth.com. This generosity has allowed us to provide Cristina, Alexandru, Colin and all our other vendors with the support they needed to cope with the second lockdown.

Vendors are now back on their pitches, and as the weather gets colder and the need for heated accommodation, warm clothes and filling meals become increasingly urgent, they will be relying on your support more than ever. Please continue to support your local vendor by buying magazines and calendars, or if your local vendor is not back yet, by buying magazines and merchandise in supermarkets or online. This year has been the most challenging that we and our vendors have ever faced, and we are incredibly grateful for your ongoing support.

To make a donation to our hardship fund to support vendors who cannot yet return to work due to their age or health or that of a member of their household, please text **HARDSHIP** to 70970 to give £5, or visit easydonate.org/HARDSHIP. Thank you.

COULD YOU BE A CHAMPION FOR BIG ISSUE NORTH VENDORS?

We're in the process of building a network of people dedicated to making their local area a fantastic place to be a Big Issue North vendor, harnessing the strengths, skills and passions of local people in our communities. Champions will develop relationships with our vendors, and create a place that gives them every opportunity to thrive.

This could take many different forms. Jon in Stoke-on-Trent – home to our southernmost pitch! – used his 3D printing skills and resources to make visors for every single vendor to return to work safely after the first national lockdown. Small Manchester business Manc Made Clothing Ltd. donated £1 from every facemask sale, as well as donating facemasks to our vendors to help them get safely back to work. The UK Hand Knitting Association and Auntie Social organised knitting drives to gift

To express an interest and make your community a great place to be a Big Issue North vendor, please email Simon Kweeday at simon.kweeday@thebiglifegroup.com



warm winter woollies to our vendors. Elsa and the team at the Manchester Victoria Co-Op branch consistently support Dave, whose pitch is based outside the shop, including gifting him with a bundle of essentials and treats every Christmas.

Here are a few more ways you could get involved:

- Identifying great places for vendors to sell in your local area
- Encouraging local businesses to do their bit – whether that's offering vendors a pitch, use of their toilet facilities, storage for their items when they have to leave their pitch, or the provision of items such as vouchers to exchange for

goods in-store

- Promoting our work in your local community by sharing our posts to local Facebook groups, organising fundraisers, or any other way you can think of to raise awareness of what we do

- Sharing skills to help our vendors to develop, such as offering English language or IT lessons

- Helping more people to start selling Big Issue North and change their lives by working with local outreach teams to distribute information leaflets about how they can work with us or signposting users of another local service to us

If this sounds like something you'd be interested in, please get in touch via the email address in the box to the left – we'd love to have you on board!



REMEMBERING ALAN

During lockdown, we received the terribly sad news that Alan, who sold Big Issue North outside Tesco in Rotherham, passed away last December.

Ben Stevenson, who runs our Sheffield office, remembers him fondly. "I was fortunate enough to work with Alan at the Sheffield Big Issue North office for a number of years," he said. "During that time, my impressions of him were always of a warm and thoughtful person, with an amazing work ethic, which reflected his driving desire and motivation to improve his situation.

"Regardless of obstacles or challenges he faced, Alan always had a kind word and thought for others, and this was greatly appreciated by staff, customers and other vendors alike. This was never more evident than when hearing about Alan's efforts to materially and

emotionally support a neighbour, who was experiencing their own hardships. This was entirely indicative of Alan's compassionate nature, and he will be greatly missed by all of us at the office, as well as his customers who got to know him over the years."

Alan was also much loved by his customers, and we know that he will be very sorely missed.



If you would like to share your memories of Alan, please email fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com

TUCK INTO THE NEW YEAR

Our 2021 calendar is on sale now from your local vendor and our online shop!

The theme this time around is vendors' favourite dishes. Twelve vendors from across the north worked with renowned chef Mary-Ellen McTague to create mouthwatering renditions of their favourite meals, ranging from classics like spaghetti bolognese to overseas dishes you may not have heard of, like tocana de pui cu orez, a Romanian chicken stew.

Photographed beautifully by Rebecca Lupton, the calendar comes complete with Mary-Ellen's recipes, so you can recreate the meals that mean the most to our vendors at home.

Calendars will cost £5, with all proceeds from shop sales supporting our vendors.

To find your local vendor, go to www.bigissuenorth.com/find-a-vendor, or buy online at shop.bigissuenorth.com/category/christmas



WEAR YOUR SUPPORT

You can now wear your support for Big Issue North with a beautiful and eco-friendly necklace!

When England first went onto lockdown on 23rd March, we were left with thousands of copies of that week's issue of Big Issue North that we were unable to sell. To reduce wastage and transform the issues into another way to support vendors through an incredibly tough time, we invited supporters to craft them into jewellery and homeware items to be sold in our online shop.

We received a wave of support, with

many items selling out within days of going online! We still have a beautiful range of necklaces on sale – though they're likely to be snapped up quickly, so don't delay in ordering yours!

With all proceeds supporting our vendors, they make thoughtful Christmas gifts for ethically-minded jewellery-wearing loved ones.

To purchase a necklace, go to shop.
bigissuenorth.com/category/handmade-gifts

THE NEW ISSUE: ISSUE 4

The fourth edition of The New Issue, our glossy quarterly subscription magazine, is out now!

Comprising of real stories beautifully told, it offers stunning photography combined with high-quality independent writing, covering everything from changing landscapes and social issues to lifestyle and fiction. It's a long read; something to take time over and savour.

All profits from The New Issue go to supporting vendors of Big Issue North, helping them overcome barriers to employment and find secure accommodation.

An aquatic theme flows through the pages of this issue. Billy Briggs and Angela Catlin bring us a story of Scottish water warfare and, as their quiet revolutions gain traction, Roger Ratcliffe lures us in deeper still with the hypnotic vibrations of the wind turbines off the coast of Grimsby.

Lisa Blower, an author we much admire, contributes an original short story under the beautiful title Don't

Let The Sea Catch You Crying, and it almost feels too easy to embrace the alien touch of their tentacles and let Sy Montgomery's octopuses pull us into their watery depths.

The outlook of The New Issue is not constrained by borders and we look over the horizon to the most cosmopolitan of all islands, Manhattan, where we find artists from across the globe living and working side by side, and to Senegal, where the tide is turning for female surfers in traditional coastal communities.

We then return to Manchester. Normally a familiar fixture selling the magazine in the city centre, in this issue we visit Colin at home, where he tries to fill the long days. There are many lessons we can take from him, and many others between these pages. After a year where it's been difficult at times to keep our heads above water, we hope you'll continue to cheer us on.

To buy, subscribe or find out more, go to www.bigissuenorth.com/the-new-issue

AROUND THE REGIONS

ACROSS THE REGIONS, staff continued to support vendors from home, providing financial aid from our hardship fund and practical support, such as foodbank referrals and assistance with applications for self-employment support packages, as well as helping more vendors to register for SumUp contactless payment machines to use post-lockdown.

In **MANCHESTER**, Big Issue North staff continued to attend the Street Engagement Hub, helping people out of begging and off the streets. Vendor Gordon also appeared on ITV's Granada Reports, discussing the challenges vendors faced during lockdown and promoting our hardship fund.



In **LIVERPOOL**, vendors Cristina and Alexandru appeared on BBC North West Today, discussing how lockdown had impacted them, from struggling to pay rent to relying on our hardship fund to provide for family – just two of the ways that selling Big Issue North usually helps vendors.



WARM HEARTS, WARM HANDS

We would like to say an enormous thank you to everyone who has sent in knitted hats, scarves, gloves and socks, as well as facemasks, to keep our vendors safe and warm this winter.

Our 2019 vendor audit found that almost a quarter of our vendors sell six or seven days a week, sometimes working up to twelve hours a day. With the weather set to become bitterly cold in the weeks ahead, ensuring that our hardworking vendors stay warm while

they work is essential, and we are incredibly grateful to everyone who has sent something in.

Incredibly, we have now received enough knitted items for all of our vendors, but we are still in need of other essentials to keep our vendors warm and dry this winter. The Hope Revolution allows members of the public to buy much-needed items to be sent directly to a charity of their

choice. Through their website or app, you can buy a fleece for £6.50, a waterproof jacket for £8.49, or a flask that keeps drinks hot for up to twelve hours for £10.49, plus many other essential items starting from as little as £1.50.

We couldn't have got through this year without the generosity of our supporters, and we are very grateful for every donation we've received.



To donate an item through The Hope Revolution, go to hope-revolution.org/bigissuenorth

How to donate

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

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



Text BINORTH to 70970 to give £5 or donate online at justgiving.com/bigissuenorth



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



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



We need you!

Raise vital funds for free when you shop online with **easyfundraising** .org.uk

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 will soon have a wide range of volunteering opportunities available, ranging from outreach and skills training to events support and awareness raising. If you are interested in getting involved, please get in touch by emailing fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com, or phoning us on 07580 878854.
- 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 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 2021? 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 07580 878854.
- 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
The Trustees of The Big Issue North Trust are: Fay Selvan • Edna Robinson • Mark Fitzgibbon • Safina Islam

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