

ABOUT BIG ISSUE NORTH MAGAZINE AND OUR CHARITY

How do you decide on the content of the magazine?

Big Issue North is produced by a small but experienced team of journalists. The editorial content of the magazine is a broad mix of local news, features and arts coverage. It is vibrant, entertaining, informative and thought-provoking – and aims to appeal to a diverse readership.



Is Big Issue North just about homelessness?

No. Among many other topics, the magazine covers a range of social issues, which includes but is not limited to homelessness.

What does the Big Issue North Trust do?

Big Issue North is a small registered charity (no. 1056041) that raises funds from the public to support vendors. This pays for staff time to support vendors in a crisis, undertake assessments and action plans, and signpost and help people to access other services. It also helps to pay for some vendor projects such as breakfast clubs and home furnishing packages.

Who pays staff costs?

Big Issue North has four main income streams – income from the sale of the magazine to the vendors, income from selling advertising space in the magazine, fundraising, and sales from the Big Issue North shop (shop.bigissuenorth.com). Big Issue North is a social enterprise, which means that it reinvests any profits it makes back into the business. It does not distribute profits to shareholders.

Vendors tell us that selling Big Issue North increases their self-confidence and motivates them to change their lives. Vendors are working, not begging.

BIG ISSUE NORTH

THE INDEPENDENT STREET PAPER | WORKING NOT BEGGING

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ABOUT BIG ISSUE NORTH

Big Issue North is a weekly magazine sold by around 350 people in towns and cities across the north of England. It gives people who have few other options the opportunity to earn an income. Selling the magazine increases vendors' confidence, helps them to develop their skills, and creates opportunities for them to change their lives.



Are vendors given the magazine or do they buy it?

Vendors buy each magazine from one of our offices for £1.50 and sell it to the public for £3, keeping the £1.50 profit they make.

Where can vendors sell?

Vendors sell on agreed pitches in city centres and out of town areas across the North West, Yorkshire and the Humber. There are currently approximately 350 pitches across our region. Big Issue North works with shopkeepers, city centre management teams and local agencies to agree pitch locations.

Why do vendors have to sell outside in poor weather?

Vendors are legally able to sell Big Issue North magazine on any public thoroughfare, but we rely on the goodwill of local retailers to provide us with pitches that are undercover.

How much do vendors earn?

There is no such thing as a typical week's income. How much vendors make depends on several factors, such as individual vendor's sales skills, the weather, or the time of year.

What is the employment status of vendors?

Big Issue North vendors are self-employed.

Can people selling Big Issue North claim benefits?

Yes. Like anyone who is self-employed, vendors can claim a range of in-work benefits. We ask all vendors to inform their local Jobcentre branch as soon as they sign up to sell Big Issue North.

Do you provide information to the police or benefits agency?

We cooperate with any legal request for information from statutory agencies. Some vendors will ask us to provide information or documentation, such as proof that they are vendors.

How long can people sell the magazine for?

We do not have a fixed time limit on how long people can sell Big Issue North for. We have tried this in the past and found that people who weren't ready to move on lost the stability of a regular income that selling the magazine provides. However, all vendors have their needs assessed and are supported to take opportunities to improve their lives, so they are no longer reliant on selling Big Issue North. This may include access to drug or alcohol treatment, training and educational classes such as ESOL, or seeking alternative employment.

Do vendors have to adhere to any rules?

We have a set of Vendor Expectations that all vendors must abide by. For instance, we expect vendors not to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs that affect their ability to work. If people consistently breach this code of conduct, they may be asked to stop selling Big Issue North. You can read our Vendor Expectations at www.bigissuenorth.com/about-us/vendor-expectations.

ABOUT OUR VENDORS

Who do you work with?

People may be unable to access mainstream employment for many reasons, such as their mental or physical health, drug or alcohol dependence, lack of skills, training or previous work experience, care responsibilities, a criminal record, or because they are new to the country. This often results in homelessness or people living in poor quality temporary accommodation. We are here for anyone over the age of 16 who needs us.

Are all Big Issue North vendors homeless?

Vendors do not have to be homeless to sell Big Issue North. Some are in private or council tenancies and are at risk of becoming homeless, while others are homeless and living in hostels, staying with friends or family, or sleeping rough.



Why do you work with so many people who are not British?

In January 2007, Romania joined the European Union, and its citizens were permitted to move and reside freely in any other EU member state, including the United Kingdom. In January 2014, all transitional controls regarding employment and access of UK services were lifted. We have seen an increase in the number of EU nationals selling the magazine since the accession of Romania to the EU – 66% of our vendors are now Romanian. However, we have more available pitches than vendors at any given time, and the cost of magazines to vendors is reinvested in the service we provide, meaning that British vendors do not lose out. On the contrary, the more people who sell Big Issue North, the better for all vendors.

Do you check if someone is legal to work first?

Vendors are self-employed (they buy their magazines from us for £1.50 and sell them on for £3). We are therefore not required to check their residency status and do not do so.

ABOUT THE SUPPORT WE OFFER

What support do you offer to the vendors?

We work with every vendor to help them to identify the barriers they face and their aspirations. We then help them develop an action plan to improve their lives, offering support (directly and through referrals) with crises, finances, accommodation, finances, health and wellbeing, education and seeking new employment. We also run projects such as home furnishing packages, breakfast clubs and Christmas gift bundles.

We see vendors when they come to buy their magazines and we also visit them on their pitches.

We offer crisis support both in the office and when we see them on outreach.

We offer follow-up appointments to vendors to help them achieve their overall goals.

We also provide support with finances, health and wellbeing, and seeking new employment.