

# FRIENDS OF BIG ISSUE NORTH SCRAP OF HOPE



**With a large blue plastic barrel balanced on a hand trolley, Lewis heads out along a back alley near his home in Preston while his dog Georgie trots along beside him. Today is a scrap metal day. It's what Lewis does when he's not selling Big Issue North over in Lytham.**

He sorts his finds into different types and goes to the local scrapyards to cash in what he's collected or take some of his finds to his lockup to store. He's been collecting scrap since he was in his late teens, when he "learnt the value of metal." It shocks him what people throw out – even a can on the side of the road is worth a few pence.

Metal isn't the only thing Lewis collects, though. Upstairs in his small rented house is a room full of books he's been given, and another full of clothes, shoes, and toys. He operates a kind of drop-in for local people. If someone needs a pair of decent shoes for a job interview, they can call on him and if he has them, he'll give them away.

Lewis knows the area well. He grew up there, went to school there and slept rough around there. He first became homeless following family problems. "With my mum – it's her house, it's her rules," he says. If he was late home from work and missed the 10pm curfew when she bolted the door, he would have to sleep in the garden.

Lewis divides his time between his scrap metal business and selling the magazine. He likes selling in Lytham because it's a "relaxing environment and

it's a good pitch. There's less footfall but they are more generous there. And it's a nice place to work and the dog can relax and go to sleep on the floor and not be bothered." He likes the fact that everyone in Lytham knows who he is. "They look after me there," he says.

He likes the contrast the two jobs give him. "I enjoy selling the magazine and chatting to the customers, but I like the thrill of the chase doing scrap, finding things and selling them on. You can make a lot of money in a day if you're lucky."

He doesn't claim benefits. "I just can't be bothered with it, arguing with them about what I should and shouldn't be doing and then waiting to see if I get anything. By doing scrap I can make the money that I need now."

He's also writing a biography. "I've had a lot of experiences. I've slept in all kinds of places – I've slept in skips and on the back of wagons, in bins and in phone boxes stood up, you know. I once walked from Stoke-on-Trent to Preston."

Lewis, 36, has been through long periods of homelessness since then, living on and off the street. "I lived in a hostel for a few months. There were 30 rooms and most of the residents were straight out of prison and doing drugs. I could taste the heroin in the air. So I took

a tent and went and lived in the woods for six months. That was better."

He now lives with his partner, who he has been with for a few years now, having met when he was selling the magazine in Preston. Lewis credits her with saving his life and setting him on the road to stability: "If I didn't have Jade and the dog I wouldn't be here now. I'm still not 100 per cent but definitely in a better place. I have a girlfriend and a dog now – that's something. For the last 15 years I had no reason to get out of bed."

He's proud of the way he's trying to get by. He doesn't care what others think of his life choices. He's "doing it his way".

And what about the future? He and Jade are engaged and there's talk of kids, and there's always the hope that he can take the scrap metal business to the next level one day, but he doesn't seem in any rush.

"These days, everyone wants everything. But if you had everything, what would you get for Christmas?" he says.

And what would he want for Christmas?

"A horse and cart," he laughs. "But then again, where would I put it?"

To make a donation to support our work with people like Lewis, please text BINORTH to 70970 to give £5, or visit [www.justgiving.com/bigissuenorth](http://www.justgiving.com/bigissuenorth). Thank you.

# VENDOR FOR A DAY

"Why are you selling Big Issue North? You don't look homeless."□

Two weeks ago, Manchester Evening News journalist Fran Way joined our Manchester vendor Colin on his pitch to have a go at selling Big Issue North for a day.

During her shift, she encountered many of the misconceptions that vendors face on a daily basis, such as that people have to be currently experiencing homelessness to work as a vendor. On the contrary, two thirds of our vendors are currently housed, and sell Big Issue North for a variety of reasons, such as not having a bank address or ID, not speaking

## STEFAN'S HOME RUN



Stefan, who sells Big Issue North in Manchester, is a prolific runner. In 2019, he competed in marathons in multiple countries, collecting a total of seven medals. Now he's gearing up to run the Manchester marathon in October to raise money for the Big Issue North Trust.

"When I was 35 years old, I had a big belly and I was over 90 kilos," he said. "I felt very, very old. After that I started to get better. I changed my nutrition. I stopped eating meat. I stopped drinking alcohol. And then, step by step, I began to renew. I learnt yoga and martial arts and I started running about 12 years ago. Now it is part of my life. It is what I do."

Stefan is now just £120 from reaching his fundraising target of £1,000 to help his fellow vendors. We are all wishing him luck, though with his track record, we don't think he'll need it!

To sponsor Stefan, please go to [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/big-issue-north-trust](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/big-issue-north-trust)



fluent English, lacking qualifications or previous experience, mental or physical illness, care responsibilities, and much more. As Fran discovered, these misconceptions can mean a dearth of sales – meaning that those who have worked hard to improve their lives miss out.

"In my whole day of selling, hundreds and hundreds of people walked past me - shockingly, very few so much as smiling back," Fran said. "In total, I got six sales, counting one I bought for myself. But

it wasn't easy. By the end of the day I'd been standing up for about six hours and I'd done over 15,000 steps. I'd also been rejected... a lot. It's difficult to keep going when people don't want you to talk to them. I could see people walking around me, crossing the road and the shifty looks."

We are very grateful to people like you for supporting our vendors and spreading the word about who they are and what they do.

To read more about Fran's experience, just go to <https://bit.ly/3CdUHU5>

## STREET NEWS

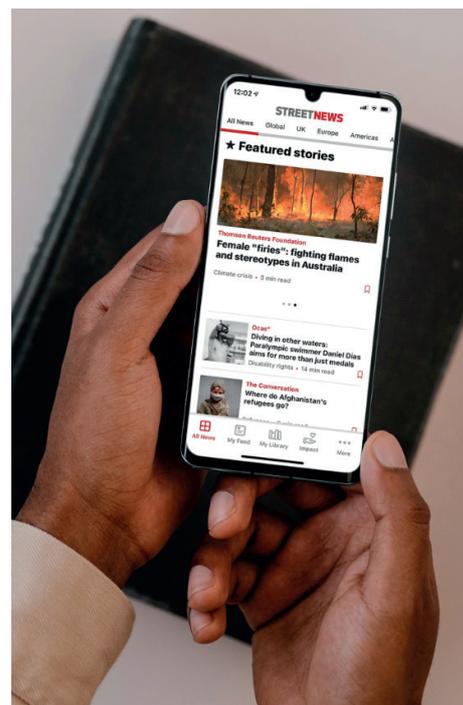
We are thrilled to announce the launch of Street News, a new app bringing you stories from disadvantaged communities and creating real change.

Street News is filled with impactful analysis and authentic stories, regularly updated and written by the people at the heart of the issues.

Our unique platform amplifies previously unheard and marginalised voices, making a real difference to our contributors and the work that they do.

Produced by the team behind Big Issue North, Street News is part of the international street paper movement, and many of the voices it features stem from those street papers.

The app gives you access to a vast range of information – with articles covering equality, housing, health, immigration, climate change and much more. It's free to download, and you can read up to five stories a month without paying a penny; however, if you want unlimited access to all our content, all we ask is a monthly £5 subscription, which goes back to helping us produce Big Issue North magazine and supporting our vendors to make positive change. Together, we can make an impact.



To download the app, just go to your app store and search "Street News"!

# A CURE TO SOCIETY'S ILLS

If you picked up a copy of Big Issue North a couple of months ago, you may have read Chris Moss's piece on mental health, in which he said that many of the behaviours understood as symptoms of mental illness are in fact normal reactions to the trials of life. This perspective shines a light on the experiences of our vendors.

In 2014, Homeless Link's Health Needs Audit found that 80% of people experiencing homelessness have a mental health problem. During our 2019 Vendor Audit, however, just 17% of vendors reported struggling with mental illness, including 23% of homeless vendors. This discrepancy is partly explained by cultural difference – while mental health is spoken about increasingly openly in Britain, 70% of our vendors were born outside of the UK, including many countries in which mental health is not discussed as freely. Vendors may have also felt unwilling to disclose a mental health condition. The extent of the disparity, however, suggests that there is possibly more at play.

Many of our vendors have experienced traumatic life events. As we have explored in previous newsletters, experiences of the care system and of domestic abuse are disproportionately high among the people who sell Big Issue North, and people with experience of homelessness more widely. Alongside these experiences, however, are the even more commonly recurrent experiences of homelessness and poverty.

While two thirds of our vendors currently have their own tenancy, almost two in five have been homeless at some point, and almost all of those vendors spent some time on the streets in that time. Tragically, almost half of them were sleeping rough for over two years. In 2019, almost a third of our vendors had also relied on a food bank or soup kitchen to eat – a figure that we suspect has risen substantially over the past 18 months, when vendors spent a total of six months unable to work due to lockdown restrictions. Even when they can work, vendors earn an average of just £60 per week, with almost a quarter working six or seven days a week, making many of the things that we consider basic necessities into unattainable luxuries.

These are experiences that have the capacity to cause deep distress for many people. Less than a sixth of our vendors



use drugs, but 68% of those who do started using them over ten years ago, suggesting deep-seated issues often stemming from traumatic experiences, which may include neglect or abuse in childhood or adulthood, but also the stress of homelessness and poverty.

Chris Moss invites us to consider the extent to which what we call mental illness is in fact a response to a deeply unwell society, and with homelessness and poverty rising sharply throughout the pandemic, this seems more relevant than ever. If you buy the magazine regularly, you may have read many Q&As with our vendors in which they describe the anguish that they have experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic as,

like many people, their already fragile financial situation rapidly deteriorated. Many of us would most likely feel that such anguish was not indicative of illness, but rather a perfectly understandable response to struggling to provide for yourself and your loved ones.

Thanks to your support over the past year, we have been able to support our vendors through this immensely difficult period. Every time you stop for a chat or to buy a magazine from your local vendor, buy from our shop or donate, you make a significant difference to the people who sell Big Issue North. If society is the illness, you are contributing to the cure, and we are very grateful for your support.

To find your nearest vendor, just go to [www.bigissuenorth.com/find-a-vendor/](http://www.bigissuenorth.com/find-a-vendor/)  
You can also browse our online shop at [shop.bigissuenorth.com](http://shop.bigissuenorth.com), or make a donation by texting BINORTH to 70970 to give £5, or going to [www.justgiving.com/bigissuenorth](http://www.justgiving.com/bigissuenorth). Thank you so much.

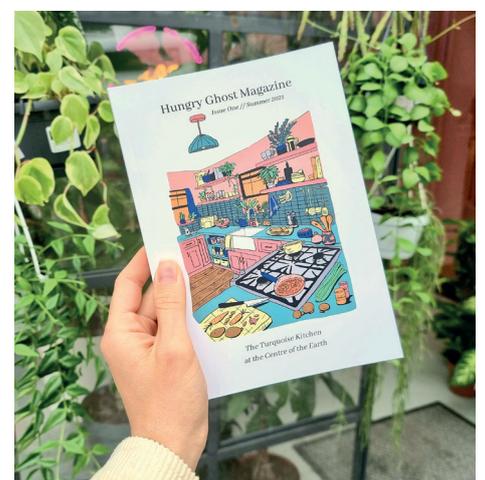
## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

**The inaugural issue of Hungry Ghost Magazine is out now!**

Edited by Manchester-based, award-winning writer and friend of Big Issue North, Leonie Rowland, Hungry Ghost Magazine publishes flash fiction, creative non-fiction, art and photography on the topics of food, hauntings, memory and consumption.

The first issue features work by 52 fantastic contributors from around the world.

Issues cost just £10, and all proceeds go to Big Issue North, making each purchase a gift for our vendors as well as yourself or a loved one!



To buy a copy or find out more, just go to [hungryghostproject.com](http://hungryghostproject.com)

# WEAR YOUR SUPPORT

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

When England first went into lockdown last March, we were left with thousands of magazines 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 readers 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, and we now have a new batch of pendants and other beautiful items in stock.

With all proceeds supporting our vendors, they make an ideal treat for yourself or a loved one!



To purchase a necklace, go to shop.  
[bigissuenorth.com/category/handmade-gifts](http://bigissuenorth.com/category/handmade-gifts)

## 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](http://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](mailto: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](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) today!

## DO SOMETHING BIG TODAY

While we always greatly appreciate donations, there are many ways you can support our vendors. Here are a few ideas:

- 1. Volunteer your time.** We will soon have a wide range of volunteering opportunities available, ranging from outreach at our vendors' pitches to raising awareness about our organisation to support at events to offering skills training. If you are interested in getting involved, please get in touch at [fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com](mailto:fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com), or call us on 0161 848 2430.
- 2. Donate goods.** Many of the comforts and conveniences we take for granted are an unattainable luxury for our vendors. If you would like to help to make life easier for them, please visit [www.givetoday.co.uk/bigissuenorth](http://www.givetoday.co.uk/bigissuenorth) to send items directly to our offices, or email [fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com](mailto:fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com) about donating used goods.
- 3. Raise sponsorship.** If you would like to undertake a sponsored activity 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 at [fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com](mailto:fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com), or call 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 subscriptions to music merchandise to handmade jewellery and homeware. To browse the selection of goods we have on offer, go to [shop.bigissuenorth.com](http://shop.bigissuenorth.com).
- 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 price – and 2% on Black Friday – at no extra cost to you. To do this, go to [smile.amazon.co.uk](http://smile.amazon.co.uk) and search for 'Big Issue North Trust'.
- 6. Become a vendor champion.** If you are interested in making your local area a great place for people to sell Big Issue North, either as a business owner or as an individual, please email [simon.kweeday@thebiglifegroup.com](mailto:simon.kweeday@thebiglifegroup.com) for more information.

### THE TRUSTEES

Big Issue North Trust is supported by the Zochonis Charitable Foundation  
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