

FRIENDS OF BIG ISSUE NORTH

WE'RE BACK!

SUMMER 2021



On Monday 12th April, we were delighted to be able to welcome hundreds of vendors back to work for the first time in 2021. After spending over half of the past year unable to sell the magazine, they were thrilled to once again be able to earn an independent income.

Vendors returned to pitches where social distancing can be maintained, equipped with face masks, visors, gloves, hand sanitiser and, where possible, contactless payment devices – something that would not have been possible without your generous support. Since England's first national lockdown was announced last year, you have donated an incredible £150,000 to our hardship fund, allowing us to provide vendors with financial aid while they were unable to work and everything they needed to get back to work safely, and bought over 1,000 items from our online shop. Dozens of volunteers have also given hours of their time to create safe and comfortable face masks and visors for our vendors, hosted or participated in fundraising events, and much more. We are truly grateful.

If you will be out and about, you can find your local pitches at bigissuenorth.com/find-a-vendor. Buying from your local vendor not only helps them to earn an income – our vendors are self-employed, buying magazines from our offices for £1.50 each before selling them on for £3 – but also has significant benefits to their mental wellbeing.

Selling Big Issue North helps Patrick, based in Manchester, to work towards permanent accommodation. “I had a relationship breakdown and I ended up on the streets,” he said. “Being on the streets in London was a bit scary. It was mind-blowing, to be honest. The things I've seen – things I never thought I'd see, especially the exploitation of people that goes on. I'm in a hostel now, but not being able to work has been a real struggle. I got some assistance through the hardship fund that Big Issue North had, which helped.”

Working as a vendor boosts Patrick's mood, too. “The worst thing about lockdown was the isolation,” he said. “Selling the magazine gives me something to do, besides making some money obviously. I was going insane not being at work.” He's not alone – a recent survey found that over half of our vendors consider improving their motivation and self-esteem to be key reasons for selling Big Issue North, and you contribute to this every time you stop for a chat or buy a magazine.

The lack of barriers to becoming a

vendor has helped Patrick back into employment after his time on the streets. “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. When you go to a potential employer they see things on your CV. So you have either got to lie about your past or accept that they will see things from your past that might leave a black mark against you. But I'm sure I will get there.”

Like many vendors, he is also enthusiastic about taking contactless payments. “I've got a card machine ready and so I will get that set up and will be able to take card payment,” he said. “I think cash is on the way out. From my own personal experience, if I go and buy something now, I normally use my bankcard because I don't like handling cash.” The contactless payment devices you have generously funded not only help to keep you and your local vendor safe, but also help them to increase their earnings in our increasingly cashless society.

As many customers and vendors may need to continue shielding, the magazine also remains on sale each week in Sainsbury's, Co-Op, McColl's and Booths branches across the North West and Yorkshire and Humber. Half of the price of each magazine goes directly to our hardship fund, with the remainder covering production costs. If you suspect that you will not be out shopping for some time, or do not have a local vendor, you can also take out a subscription at shop.bigissuenorth.com/category/subscriptions. Our shop also features a range of products, from The New Issue (see page 2) to music merchandise and beautiful jewellery crafted from unsold magazines (see page 4). All proceeds support our vendors.

Your support at this most difficult of times is immensely appreciated. Thank you.

To make a donation to support our work, please text BINORTH to 70970 to give £5, or visit www.justgiving.com/bigissuenorth. You can also continue to support the magazine and our vendors by buying physical copies from Sainsbury's, Co-Op, McColl's and Booths or digital copies from issuu.com/bigissuenorth, or by shopping at shop.bigissuenorth.com. Thank you.

THE NEW ISSUE: ISSUE 6

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

Comprising 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.

This time, we find that it doesn't take tanks on the presidential lawn. The forces threatening many democracies now are those of erosion and decay, not the good old-fashioned coup d'état.

Governments in India, Poland and elsewhere have got there by the ballot box. It's then they set about undermining the rule of law, threatening the media and

denying their citizens – some of whom don't actually mind – their human rights.

Lots of them do, including the Polish women we photograph speaking up for their reproductive rights and the farmers in India whose patience and endurance in defending their way of life might be as strong as any erosive force.

Meanwhile, the struggle for access to clean water and toilets for Honduran schoolchildren is a less provocative but no less elemental human rights concern.

Quite what Dostoevsky would have made of these struggles isn't clear. The great Russian writer warned against the nihilism of leaders who seek power any cost and defended individual freedom. But with his accent on nationalism and his attacks

on revolutionary and liberal thinking in the 19th century, he was no friend of the left. In our comic strip biography, it's the mismatched loves of his life that concern him more.

The New Issue is sister publication to the street paper Big Issue North.

Subscriptions support the work we do to support its vendors, who are now back on the streets after lockdown and able to accept contactless payments for magazines – although not cryptocurrencies, which we explore within.

We hope you enjoy The New Issue's blend of high-quality long-reads, photo-essays, fiction and more. There are no tanks on the lawn but there's a ballet dancer on the beach and, if you look hard enough, a hen harrier sky dancing over northern moorland.



REMEMBERING TIM



It is with a heavy heart that we have to announce the death of Timothy Fisher, who sadly passed away early this month.

Tim had been a vendor for Big Issue North since 2012. In that time, Tim had worked in numerous locations, but in recent years found working in Ilkley to be life changing. Tim, who often kept himself to himself, found the community in Ilkley welcoming and was quickly befriended by so many. He always spoke so graciously about the people he has had the opportunity to meet whilst working.

He frequented Christ Church in Ilkley where he was to be later baptised. This was to be one of his greatest experiences, of which he was immensely proud.

Although Tim's health hadn't always been great, he would always have a smile and stay a while to have a bit of a natter, both of which the Big Issue North team, and no doubt many others, will sadly miss.

If you would like to share your memories of Tim to be printed in Big Issue North, you can get in touch at fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com

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 to raise money for the Big Issue North Trust.

About to turn 60, Stefan is showing no signs of slowing down, and is now gearing up to enter the Manchester Marathon in October to raise funds for the Big Issue North Trust, who he says changed his life. To the tune of Jingle Bells, he sings his vending jingle: "Big Issue, Big Issue, thank you Big Issue! Big Issue, Big Issue, so much I love you!"

"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."

We are all wishing Stefan 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

VENDORS' SALES SUFFER IN THE SUN

The recent wave of warm weather would seem to offer the perfect recipe for good sales. People were out on the streets in droves, enjoying the sun, the break, and the easing of restrictions – some of the highest numbers of potential customers in over a year. Vendors couldn't be blamed for expecting to earn a little more than usual. Instead, many found themselves struggling to make enough to cover their bus fares.

Part of the issue, one vendor hypothesised, is that people lose sympathy when the weather is good. This goes beyond compassion and admiration for vendors' willingness to stand outside for hours at a time in wet, windy, and freezing conditions to a common misconception about our vendors' backgrounds.

Vendor demographics have changed significantly since we started out over 25 years ago. Back then, experiencing homelessness was a prerequisite for selling the magazine. Today, though, two thirds of our vendors are housed (albeit often in precarious or unsuitable accommodation), and come rain or shine, they have rent and bills to pay. For those vendors who are currently experiencing homelessness, sales are likewise vital even when it's hot – and perhaps especially so, as the risk of heat stroke makes access to temporary and eventually permanent accommodation just as important as when it provides shelter from the cold and rain.

Many vendors are not only providing for themselves, but also for loved ones. "I sell because I have four children," said Florica, who sells Big Issue North in Crewe. "I have to feed my family, to buy clothes, keep the family going. I don't make a lot of money but I am thankful for everything I get. I really appreciate all the help. I am grateful for everything."

Florica's employment opportunities are limited by the lack of educational opportunities she had growing up. "I went to school as a child but only for a few years when I was very young," she said. She is not alone – our most recent vendor audit found that just 6% of the women who sell Big Issue North hold formal qualifications, making them almost six times less likely to have



qualifications than male vendors.

Cassandra, who sells the magazine in Trafford, is in a similar position – "it's my job," she said, "and we need the money for my family". With her husband working long and irregular hours as a food delivery driver, the self-employment model of Big Issue North also provides her with the flexibility she needs to look after her children.

At their worst, misconceptions about the requirements for selling the magazine can lead to harassment and abuse. "There are some people who walk past and say bad things," Cassandra said. "They swear at me and say I shouldn't be selling the magazine and that I am lying about myself. When I see them, I sometimes go away and have a brew and then come back when they have gone." At the lower

end of the spectrum, though, they can also result in people being less willing to reach into their pockets to take out their wallet or smartphone and buy a magazine, believing that vendors are in less need of their income than in colder months.

We are very grateful to our readers for not only continuing to support our vendors throughout the most challenging periods of the past year, but also during this time of hope and sunshine. We hope that you continue to enjoy the magazine and chats with your local vendor, and if you would like to do more to help, taking a moment to talk to your loved ones about who our vendors are, what they do and why they and the magazine are worth supporting would be greatly appreciated.

To find your nearest vendor, just go to www.bigissuenorth.com/find-a-vendor/

GIVE A GIFT THAT GOES FAR

Have you ever wished you could make a difference at the click of your fingers! Well, now you can, all thanks to Give Today by the Hope Revolution!

Give Today allows you to buy the items our vendors most desperately need and have them sent directly to your nearest office in just a few clicks. From PPE to toothbrushes and toothpaste to jackets, you can select the items you'd like to donate from as little as £3.49, and the amazing Hope Revolution team will see to it that they are sent out straight away.

At present, we are particularly in need of flasks, which help our vendors to



stay hydrated in the summer heat, and backpacks, which allow them to carry their magazines and other personal items safely and comfortably while they are out on their pitch. However, all of the items listed on our shop are always needed and all donations are very much appreciated!

To donate items through Give Today, just go to www.givetoday.co.uk/bigissuenorth. Alternatively, if you have used or handmade items you would like to donate, you can get in touch at fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com

WEAR YOUR SUPPORT

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

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 earrings 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

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



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. 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, 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 to send items directly to our offices, or email 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, 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.
- 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 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 for more information.

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 • Andy Rafferty • Liam Symonds
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