

FRIENDS OF BIG ISSUE NORTH

SUMMER 2016

“STREET LIFE IS A JOURNEY THAT COULD HAPPEN TO ANYONE”

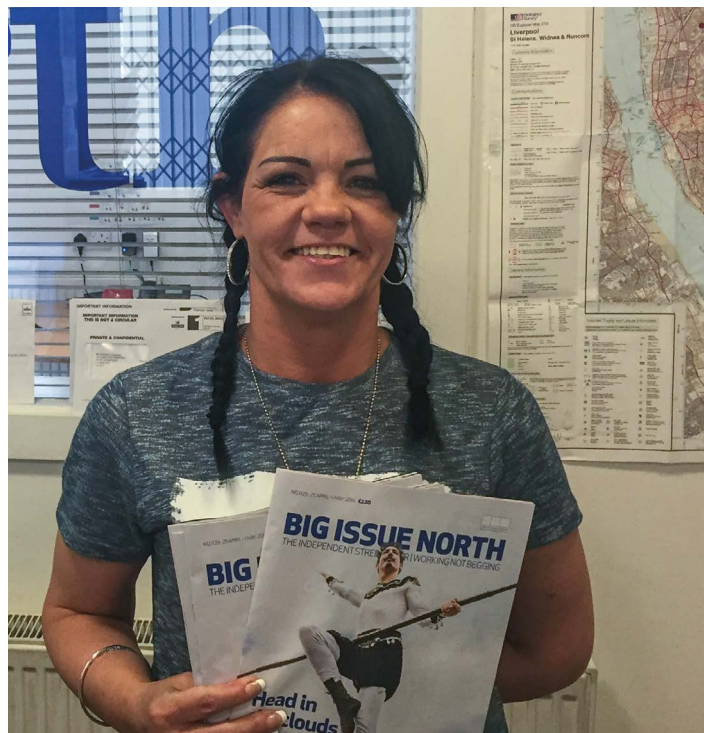
Karen, Co-ordinator for Big Issue North Liverpool, tells us about her experiences and what led to working with us.

“I first became homeless in 2009; I had been with my partner for 16 years, had 4 children and never known anything different so when that relationship broke down due to domestic violence I was left very vulnerable. He was always the one to make the rules and decisions; I’d never made a decision in my life! I picked up drink to hide my fear and pain. From there it quickly descended and I lost my kids and my home. I felt the best thing to do was to leave the Wirral and was placed in a hostel in Liverpool, that wasn’t very beneficial for a social drinker like me. I’d never experienced drug addiction or street life before. I met someone in the hostel and he already sold the mag. He was nice to me for

a while but turned out to be violent as well.

We fought a lot, my drink escalated and it got to the stage where we were kicked out of the hostel and ended up on the street. I had nothing left so I came into the Big Issue North office and got badged up. I used to get up at 6am every day, go to the Mission to get a coffee and then some magazines and stand on Bold St selling all day. At first I was only really doing it to get money to pay for alcohol. I was good at selling the mag, I think that was because I was nice and polite and people felt sorry for me as half the time I had black eyes or bruises. The only good thing about that time was I did get to know street life and it made me stronger and more independent.

Eventually the violence became too much and I came into the office and asked for their help. They got me into



the YMCA and the next day I went into detox. I was there for 3 months and it gave me the strength to fight back. Afterwards I went back to Liverpool and fell into my old life with my partner but I was stronger and wanted something to change, my children were older then and getting in touch with me and I knew I needed to get back on track. I went to Women’s Turnaround and never looked back. I didn’t drink again after that and I don’t drink today.

I kept in touch with the office and one day they suggested I do some voluntary work. So I filled in all the forms, and while I was doing that a position for Relief Cashier came up so I applied for the job. I was so nervous, it was my first interview and I’d never even done a job application before. It was really hard but I got through it. Afterwards I was invited back for a trial day in the

office and I got the job!

I’ve been here since November now and it’s amazing. I love working with the staff and watching the vendors grow. There’s a couple of them that have been doing it a long time and know me from my time selling the mag and for them to see me, it’s good. It’s showing them there’s something else out there, there’s a better life. One of the vendors is now thinking about going into detox as well, which is brilliant. I don’t tell anyone what to do, I just show them how much happier I am now. I don’t judge them; the street life is just a journey that could happen to anyone.

Next I really hope to get a full time job here, I want to support people to get off the streets and make a change. I just want to see people happy, when I see someone smiling, I’m smiling.”

Karen has now been appointed as Co-ordinator.

Letter from Fay

Welcome to the Friends of Big Issue North newsletter, summer 2016. We have redesigned the newsletter to reflect the magazine which we hope you like. This new design looks great as an online newsletter too so if you would prefer this by email, please let us know.

I wanted to thank everyone who donated to Big Issue North Trust following our last newsletter; your contributions are invaluable and enable us to continue to support vendors to change their lives.

Fay Selvan – Big Issue North Trust CEO



We have just completed an audit in which **242** of our vendors gave us a greater insight into how to best support vendors to **change their lives.**

39% ♀
are female

21% are
under **25**

65% are between
26 and 50



Lack of qualifications, Language skills, and finances are the 3 main barriers to moving into other work.

72%
have no formal
qualifications



93% who speak English as a second language say selling the magazine improves their English skills.



30%
have no form of
bank account

57% say selling Big Issue North increases confidence and/or motivation.

VASILLE TO GO VIRAL FO



Indie Hip-Hop trio PROSE have been passionate about Big Issue North for a while. Their frontman Mike experienced homelessness when he was 17 and has been committed to raising the profile of homelessness and supporting organisations like ours. They first got involved by busking for us in Manchester city centre last year. Then they were involved with Vendor Week in February, becoming guest sellers of Big Issue North.

After that, the band contacted us about featuring Big Issue North vendors and their stories in a series of music videos they released with new music.

There are four videos in total, one in Manchester featuring frontman Mike

from PROSE, one in Liverpool featuring Tony, one in Sheffield featuring Murph and one in Leeds featuring Vasilie (pictured), all of whom are vendors for Big Issue North.

The videos beautifully showcase the lives of our vendors and each one tells a different story about homelessness. Vasilie, who has sold Big Issue North magazine for 2 years, got involved with the project to give people an insight into his life.

"This video tells my story, my life. Many people often say to me, "Why are you in this country, go back home." I am from Romania where there is poverty and little opportunity to work. First I lived in Liverpool but it was not right for me. Leeds is my home now; I live here with



Big Issue North staff and vendor Chris (second from right)

AN END TO HOMELESSNESS?

Last month Manchester launched the Homelessness Charter which brings together organisations, businesses and people with a shared mission to end homelessness. They adopt the charter values and pledge to support homeless people across Manchester by donating products, skills or finances.

Big Issue North vendor Chris went along to the launch to find out how different people and organisations were getting involved.

"I thought the launch event was really good. There were loads of good ideas shared and if they come in it will mean more services and better support for

homeless people in Manchester. I feel positive about it because more people are getting involved now – different businesses and organisations and not just the ones who already work with the homeless.

I'd like to see people's perceptions of homelessness change. There are a lot of good services out there but people don't know about them. We need to talk to schools, colleges and offices to tell them what being homeless is like and how to help, like buying the magazine."

To find out more about the charter and to pledge your support please visit <https://charter.streetsupport.net>

OR PROSE

my wife in a nice house.”

The team in our Leeds office have spent a lot of time helping Vasilie get his National Insurance number and registering as self-employed so that he can claim working tax credits.

“It’s difficult because I have to earn £150 a week, every week, to be able to get any benefits, this isn’t often possible. Selling the magazine to do that is hard even though I have many good customers and I go to my pitch every day and work very hard.”

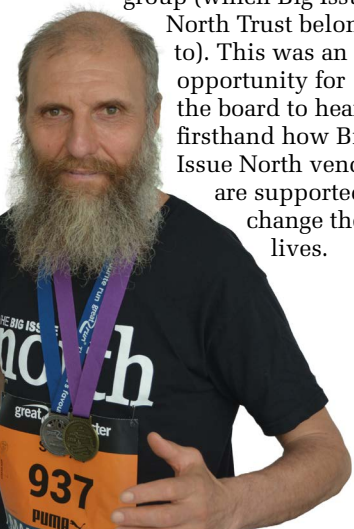
“I was happy for the people to make a film of me. The camera, the attention was no problem because I want to tell people about my life. I am happy here, I have worked on my pitch for over 3 months now and people expect me to be there. One lady comes every week, very happy and always buys the magazine. Some people want to give me half of the money or less but I want them to buy the magazine. This is my job, to sell the magazine, I do it with pride.”

To watch the videos please visit – [youtube.com/prosevivo](https://www.youtube.com/prosevivo)

Running Nan

Manchester vendor Stefan Nan is a keen athlete. He ran the 10K Manchester Great Run for the second year running and managed it in 43mins and 27secs and coming 9th in his age group. Well done Stefan!

He also recently spoke to the board of The Big Life group (which Big Issue North Trust belongs to). This was an opportunity for the board to hear firsthand how Big Issue North vendors are supported to change their lives.



Making a house a home

Mike has been a vendor with Big Issue North in Leeds for 6 months and is hopeful that a new opportunity might lead to his own home.

Canopy housing is a Leeds-based housing project that provides housing opportunities for people who are homeless by renovating derelict buildings. They approached our Leeds office and accepted Mike onto their latest project.

“Basically I’m going to do voluntary work, painting, decorating and just helping out to make new houses for people but at the end I get a new flat to rent out of it so you’re doing up your new home. Once it’s decorated Canopy furnishes it for you so it’s all ready to go.”

Mike has been sofa surfing, staying with friends who put him up, but has been hoping for a place of his own for a while.

“This project seems like a better deal than waiting for a council house or something to come up. I’ve got a few good mates who are helping me out. But if I can’t stay with them then the only other place I can go is my mam’s and I don’t like doing that because she’s got a lot of problems of her own, with her health



problems and that, and I don’t like to burden her. “

“I’m hoping from being involved with Canopy Housing and getting my own place, it could lead to getting a stable job. I might be able to get a reference from them and build up my CV. I plan to carry on volunteering with them and helping out with other projects so more people can get new homes too.”

“I’ve got qualifications in painting and decorating and I’m a trained chef, I’m not bothered what I do, a job’s a job but I’ll work hard at whatever I can get. There’s no point being sat around not doing anything, I’m happy to work hard.”

A NEW VOLUNTEER

Lisa has started volunteering with Big Issue North in Sheffield after volunteering for more than six years with neighbouring charity, the Archer Project.

Lisa was originally a service user at the Archer Project, looking for support with her own experiences of homelessness and drug addiction. After seeing how they could help, she decided to get involved.

“I am really passionate about helping people move on from homelessness and the issues that come with it. I’ve been with the Archer Project for a while now and know how it works. I wanted



to volunteer with Big Issue North to see a different approach to helping people.

The staff are brilliant and I’ve really enjoyed the work so far. I love going out on outreach, working with the vendors and getting to know them. I’m volunteering once a week and will be helping with employment support such as writing CVs, job searching and applications.”

REGIONAL ROUNDUP

Vendor Andy in **SHEFFIELD** received notification that he is now a priority on the social housing waiting list and has begun the bidding process for a new home. He’s getting support from our office and the Archer Project to find the right place and is hopeful that he will be settling in somewhere soon.



MANCHESTER vendors joined staff members to compete in a football tournament for Manchester Metropolitan University’s Street to Feet campaign, a tournament that engages homeless people with the services they need. Since then our vendors have joined the regular Big Life group football sessions.

In April Vendor Sean started working part-time at a local pub in **SHEFFIELD**. It was his first time pulling pints but he’s received positive feedback from the landlord and is enjoying it very much.

Our LEEDS team have been helping vendors get registered to vote so they can have their say in the upcoming EU referendum.

We recently received a lovely email from a man who had been shopping in ASDA, **FARNWORTH** who spotted Big Issue North vendor, lonel return some cash that had been left in the cash point to a security guard so it could be reunited with the customer.

We’d love to hear your feedback or stories about our vendors. This newsletter or the magazine. Please email us at fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com

VENDOR'S GOT TALENT

Alexandru, vendor in Liverpool recently informed us of his musical endeavours - he was on Romanian X Factor last year!

"I did very well. Two of the judges wanted me to go through to the next round, but one judge told me that I should come back next year and try again. One judge, Delia [Matache], who is very famous in Romania, really loved my singing, especially because I sang one of her songs. I hope to go back in 2017."

Alexandru lives with his brother Costica and sister Iulica in Liverpool; all three of them sell Big Issue North.

"I sell the magazine to make money and I use some of this to help with making CDs and videos in Romania, which is very expensive. In Romania we had jobs working in restaurants but the wages there are very small. We would earn £100 a month. It is hard to make any money in Romania and life is very hard."

Since moving here, the team in our Liverpool office have been helping the siblings get set up in their home including getting their house furnished by local company Bulky Bob's who provide furniture for vulnerable people who aren't able to afford their own.



Alexandru (middle) with sister Iulica (left) and brother Costica (right).

While it's not nice to think about what happens after we're gone, leaving a legacy means you can make a lasting, positive change to people's lives.

Last year we received two legacies that enabled us to provide lasting support to vendors. We provide an opportunity for people to earn an income who have no other means and we need your help to continue to support people with no alternative means of income for as long as is necessary.

To find out more about making a legacy for Big Issue North vendors please contact us on 0161 848 2420 or 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 the Big Issue North Trust as your chosen charity and start raising at no extra cost!

Go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk today!

Other ways to donate -

regular donations are a great way to support us going forward. If you are looking to set up a standing order to support our vendors please call 0161 831 5556 and we'll get that sorted.



You can also donate by mobile phone, just text BITN16 and the amount you wish to donate e.g. £20 to 70070



To make donations by cheque please make it out to Big Issue North Trust and send it to 10 Swan Street, Manchester, M4 5JN.



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

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 • Angela Young • Paul Ferry
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