

Big Issue North now on sale in seven retailers across the north

Wednesday 29 April, 2020

We are now in the seventh week since pulling Big Issue North from the street for the first time in its twenty-eight year history for the safety of our vendors and customers. With no indication of when and how lockdown will end, we know that many customers as worried as our vendors are about how these restrictions will affect them now and in the long term.

Like many organisations, we have had to adapt to an entirely new existence in order to continue to support the hundreds of people working to change their lives across the north. One way in which we've been able to do so is through teaming up with supermarkets. We are incredibly grateful to Sainsbury's, McColl's, Co-Op, Asda, One Stop, Morrisons and Waitrose for stocking their shelves with Big Issue North for the first time, giving people the opportunity to continue to support the magazine during their weekly shops. Half of our proceeds go directly to our vendor hardship fund while the rest covers our printing and editorial costs, usually covered by our vendors buying the magazine for our offices, which keeps the magazine afloat until vendors are able to return to work.

If you do not live locally to any of these shops or prefer to shop online, you can also buy back issues or take out a three, six or twelve month subscription at shop.bigissuenorth.com, or buy digital issues at issuu.com/bigissuenorth. We also sell a range of merchandise on our online shop, from music posters and t-shirts to jewellery and homeware, as well as subscriptions to and the first and second issue of The New Issue, our new quarterly subscription magazine.

We currently provide around £2,500 from our hardship fund to vendors each week. Our 2019 vendor audit found that a third of our vendors were homeless, while the rest were vulnerably housed. Our staff have been working hard to ensure all our vendors are safely housed, from finding new accommodation for vendors who cannot remain in temporary accommodation such as hostels due to social distancing restrictions to covering the cost of rent.

We have also provided gas and electricity payments for many of our vendors. As vendors do not have a stable income, many have pay as you go gas and electricity meters. While these are convenient for people who struggle to commit to regular payments, they also often work out to be more expensive, meaning that even vendors who did have some money saved have struggled to keep them topped up, allowing them to heat their houses, cook, clean and safely store essential medicine, such as insulin.

For vendors who do not have access to a foodbank, we have also been able to help with essential shopping, from food to medication to baby products. We were able to work with Sheffield City Council to get a Sainsbury's voucher to one of our vendors, a former rough sleeper who is now housed by the council. They have been helping the vendor to keep in touch with us and other essential services, as he does not have access to a phone or the internet. For those who do, we have also provided mobile phone top-ups and broadband payments to ensure that their means of contacting us and others are not cut off.

Without your incredible generosity, none of this would be possible. If you would like to help, please text **HARDSHIP** to 70970 to give £5, or visit easydonate.org/HARDSHIP to give as much or as little as you can afford. If you would like to donate by an alternative means or have an idea to raise funds from your living room, you can email us at fundraising@bigissueinthenorth.com or message us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or LinkedIn.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

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