

vendor life

THE BIG ISSUE IN THE
north
VENDOR CODE OF CONDUCT

WHO SELLS THE BIG ISSUE IN THE NORTH?



Old ladies sometimes give me a pound but I don't take it because I'm not there to beg for money

Name	Adele McCormack
Age	35
Pitch	The Co-op, Saltaire, Bradford

I have been selling The Big Issue in the North for about nine weeks now. I like it because it stops me from getting in trouble with the police and going to prison. It stops me grafting – what we call thieving and shoplifting.

I was in and out of prison, but selling *The Big Issue in the North* has shown me that there is more to life. I was living with a drug user, my partner, for nine years. But now I am earning an income and looking after my kids it's much better. I can go out and buy things and I feel honest that I am buying it rather than pinching it.

I'm from Bradford. I'm still with my partner but now he's on a methadone programme. We got to church every Sunday in Bradford and we've met some really nice people. We met a couple who invited us to their homes and made us a meal. They look after us and we enjoy it; the kids love it.

I don't want my kids growing up like I did. I want something better for them, a bit of stability. My partner was a heroin and crack addict but I never used those drugs myself. *The Big Issue in the North* has provided me with an incentive. If anything goes wrong, I can go and talk to people.

I'm taking my driving lessons now. I'm trying to change my life around and I've just got to take one step at a time.

My daughters are aged 11 and 14. We all live together. Social services didn't even want to help me. I was sleeping in the park with my two kids and sleeping on people's floors for about five months. It was really bad. I was stealing every single day to fund my partner's habit and to fund bed and breakfasts for all of us.

We got placed in different hostels and we were homeless for about 18 months. But then we found a project in Bradford called About Turn. They help you turn your life around so you can try and keep your tenancy. I started off with a shorthold tenancy and now I'm a proper tenant. I've got my kids back into school full time.

My partner is a lot better. He is on probation and he is trying to get two days off a week so he can start selling the magazine, so we can get more things for the house.

Don't get me wrong, I'm stood outside the Co-op and I could just go in and rob. But I think, why should I? I'm earning money. People say they really like me. Old ladies sometimes give me a pound but I don't take it because I'm not there to beg for money. I'm there working for money and that's what I want to do.

INTERVIEW AND PHOTO: HELEN CLIFTON

All vendors selling **The Big Issue in the North** must abide by the Code of Conduct, the set of rules governing how they work. Outreach teams from The Big Issue in the North patrol the streets daily to check vendors' behaviour and to encourage and support them while working. Here are some of the key rules:

1. Vendors can only sell on designated pitches organised by The Big Issue in the North.
2. Vendors cannot sell between 8.00pm and 7.00am. Police officers have the authority to confiscate magazines and badges if they witness vendors selling during these hours.
3. Vendors must always wear their own badge when buying or selling the magazine and only sell magazines with their number on.
4. Vendors can only buy magazines for themselves.
5. Vendors must not use physical or verbal aggression towards the public or other vendors.
6. Vendors are not allowed to sell if staff feel they are unfit to do so.
7. Vendors must stand when selling; sitting down is an obstruction to the public highway and is illegal.
8. Vendors must not beg for money using the magazine. Asking for spare change or other items is considered to be begging.
9. Vendors can only charge £2.00 for each magazine and must always give the customer the magazine once paid for. Failing to do so is fraudulent and may result in police involvement.

To comment on vendor behaviour, please call:
Manchester: 0161 831 5570
Liverpool: 0151 702 6931
Leeds: 0113 243 9027

The Big Issue in the North Trust raises funds to provide services for homeless vendors of this magazine.

For recruitment and volunteer opportunities turn to page 35