

vendor life

THE BIG ISSUE IN THE
north
VENDOR CODE OF CONDUCT

WHO SELLS THE BIG ISSUE IN THE NORTH?



I decided I am not going to give my dog up. He comes first

Name	Shaun McDermott
Age	43
Pitch	Manchester city centre

I started selling *The Big Issue in the North* in September last year. I was on the streets at the time, living in a tent in fields down by the canal in Ancoats. I was doing that for about two and a half months. It was all right in the tent. It was warm, dry, nobody knew where we were. It felt as if it was safe.

I got evicted from a house in Bolton. I got some notice and I went down to the Citizen's Advice Bureau. They said stick it out and you can have squatters' rights – it will take them two years to get you evicted. But I just went because I couldn't deal with all the arguments.

Because I've got a dog, it's hard to find anywhere. But I decided I am not going to give my dog up. He comes first. It isn't fair on him, he didn't ask for this to happen.

He's a belting dog. His name is Bruce, after Bruce Lee. A mate of mine thought they would get a pet for the family but he moved somewhere where they wouldn't allow pets and they asked if I could keep him. We've been through a lot together and I don't think it is fair for me to let him go through that again.

I'm currently living in sheltered

accommodation in Openshaw. I've been there since November. I have been homeless before, in Plymouth, for about two years. I was in and out of hostels. I fell out with family. It's a long story but there was family breakdown. I had some other family down in Plymouth so I went there but I fell out with them too.

I have never really worked, not as such, because I didn't have the qualifications. At the moment I am studying English literature. Selling *The Big Issue in the North* is OK. It's a good thing but it's not the greatest career move.

Hopefully I am going to get a flat and take it from there. *The Big Issue in the North* has helped me get by, helped me get through for him and me, and helped me get out of the tent. I won't stop selling it until I have got myself sorted and now I'm helping run the magazine's breakfast club.

I want to get myself on a training course but at the moment I can't leave Bruce in the flat on his own. He's got to be with me 24/7.

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.

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For recruitment and volunteer opportunities turn to page 35