

# PERFECT

A regular, friendly spot selling in London has given Dave the confidence that has seen him get a flat and start making art

I'm from Derby originally but I've done a fair bit of travelling; I've been to Leeds, York, Nottingham. Eventually I found myself in London. I was living on the streets, begging, when a vendor came up to me and said that I could be doing something better, making my own living. He told me about The Big Issue and I decided to give it a go: earn a living, get some self-respect.

Now I do the same when I see homeless people. I tell them about The Big Issue and how they can get badged up. I also carry extra copies of The Pavement with me so I can give those out – it's got useful information inside like day centres and shelters.

The old Vauxhall office was a landmark. That's where I used to get my mags from. It's an estate agent's now. There's loads of estate agents round Hammersmith too; along one street there's at least five. My pitch is nearby, just outside Brook Green Tesco. I've built up a good customer base and made some good friends along the way too. It's sad to see them go when they move.

My first pitch was at Victoria. The first day there was emotional, and an eye-opener. People ignored me. That still happens. But I concentrated on sales and things picked up. Everyone was always rushing through Victoria. It's what I call a commuter pitch – everyone rushing to get to the office.

I sold the magazine at Euston for a while. That was what I call a travellers' pitch. Very few regulars, hard to get a customer base going. In Hammersmith I'm at what I call a residential pitch. I see the same people every day and when I'm not there people worry, they expect me to be there 24/7 and they miss me if I'm not there! It's nice, and I like it in Hammersmith, I'd like to live here.

I'm on my pitch between 1pm and 6pm come rain or shine. A lot of people say to me: "I don't know how you do it" but it's just layers. Sometimes you've got to front it up, you know? I'll be freezing but I have to stay happy. I need to sell a certain amount of mags to pay my way but I'm not out to get rich, I'm happy with what I do. I do find that there's a lot of generosity from people who are not that well off themselves.

About four weeks ago I moved into my own little

flat. One bedroom in Tottenham. St Mungo's helped me to get it and I'd like to say a special thank you to them. It's part of the Homes for Haringey initiative to get people out of supported accommodation and into permanent housing. I was at St Ignatius before, for about three years. I like St Mungo's, they helped me before when I needed a hostel place, and they help people with dogs. A lot of people stay on the streets because they have dogs and few places will let them in.

I'm making a living, I'm self-employed, I'm independent. My confidence has increased a lot. What is it they say? Practice makes perfect! When you meet friendly people, that makes all the difference, that's helped my confidence a lot. And The Big Issue Foundation supporting me, that's helped a lot too. I'm a lot more confident now, because of all these opportunities through the Foundation and the magazine.

When I was asked to be part of the Bryan Adams photoshoot for The Big Issue magazine I didn't know what to expect. There were eight of us and it took a while, we had to do all different poses to get the image right. I was there for a couple of hours I reckon. I've still got the double feature.

I went to an interactive exhibition at the Tate Modern with other vendors and Service Brokers. And I was at the House of Lords representing The Big Issue when the BBC was filming a documentary there.

I did the Night Walk in 2016, which is The Big Issue Foundation's fund- and awareness-raising half-marathon sponsored walk through London, and I was also selected for an indoor pitch at Northern Trust in Canary Wharf.

While on this placement, I suddenly felt very creatively inspired and I started making abstract art. I use coloured card. Someone told me it looks a bit like Matisse – I didn't realise.

I have a piece I call "Borderline", and another one called "Star". I've made two albums, with 36 pieces per album, and I'm working on a third. I'd like to make a living from it and I've entered two pieces into the Royal Academy summer exhibition. We'll see if anything comes of it. So I suppose you could say that the Foundation has inspired me; I became inspired. I'd like to say a big THANK YOU TO THE BIG ISSUE AND THE BIG ISSUE FOUNDATION!

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# PITCH



## OUR FRIENDS AT NORTHERN TRUST

Naomi Venn, Head of Corporate Marketing and Communications EMEA said: "The Big Issue Foundation provides valuable support and services to hard working vendors, and we are delighted to be able to open up our office to provide some extra opportunities for vendors to increase their selling capacity and provide some stability in a new environment. It has been really positive to see Dave, our most recent vendor, grow in confidence over the course of his placement with us and we wish him well in his next chapter."

Northern Trust's signature volunteering programme, Northern Trust Community Partners, offers all permanent employees the opportunity to spend two paid days out of the office each year to support charity and community initiatives. Some employees have spent time with Big Issue vendors on the streets of London, helping them sell magazines to the public to gain a greater understanding of the challenges facing vendors and the work The Big Issue Foundation does.