

THE EDITOR

This is a milestone. Where will it take us?



Illustration: Lauren Crow

In autumn 1991, Bob Dylan didn't have a Nobel Prize. In fact, his late period renaissance that kicked off with *Time Out Of Mind* had yet to come.

Mikhail Gorbachev was still in charge in Russia, making the world feel that not only had the Cold War thawed, but a period of global peace was here to stay.

Donald Trump was a garish self-publicist with weird hair.

Syria was a (relatively) stable state and friend of the West.

The euro was barely a glint in a technocrat's eye. A run at a bank was a thing that happened in the Depression. The internet didn't really exist. Amazon was simply a river.

In the intervening 25 years, as the world has shifted angrily with what feels like unstoppable pace, The Big Issue has pulsed and grown. Our focus has remained true. A hand up not a handout. That's it. Everything else builds from there.

A means to make a living, a means to move out of broken poverty back into society, allowing the men and women who sell The Big Issue to rebuild their sense of self, for those who were invisible to become visible.

There is a traceable line through our history in which we have challenged authorities to work for the poorest in society, to act rather than to pay lip service.

You can see how The Big Issue changed the publishing world. Before we came along, newspapers were sold on the street, but not magazines. And certainly not by homeless people. Now, the street is not just an accepted place of distribution but a

crowded one. Still, we remain the only street magazine that charges for copies. And while the move to digital is hurting many fine old print titles, we're on the up.

While our medium of sale is a clear message, our content, the message between the pages, is vital. We enjoy being a rogue element, a raised rebel voice that challenges orthodoxy and standardised received notions.

John Bird, The Big Issue founder and still our pilot light and beating heart, this week details the core ambition for the next stage of The Big Issue development. To be locked into prevention; to deal with the foundations of poverty rather than treating the symptoms.

To begin, we will look to literacy. We will fight for those without access to books, the great joy and possibilities of reading. We will agitate to protect libraries and independent bookshops.

We must also seek to speak for those still ignored or cast aside, whether damaged by stinging austerity measures, or feeling locked out of society by whatever means. We must think of kids here

acting as carers, or indeed those about to face an uncertain world as they are set adrift after a life in care. We must look to the children left alone to dark, malignant forces in migrant camps just across the sea. We will, of course, seek to be a great magazine that continues to mean more than just the words on the page.

There is work to be done. We hope you stay with us. This week, though, we shall have a little cake.

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SO... WH HOMELE

but why don't the homeless just go home?



Nick Hardwick, director of Centrepoint and long-time campaigner on homeless issues, writes on the causes of the growing homelessness in London, one of the richest cities in the world.

Homeless people, while not new to London, have become a more visible part of the city's landscape. In the past, they were often hidden away in the shadows of the city's architecture, but now they are more visible than ever before. The number of homeless people in London has risen steadily over the years, and this is a worrying trend. The causes of homelessness are complex and multifaceted, but they can be broadly divided into two main categories: structural and individual. Structural causes include the high cost of housing, the lack of affordable housing, and the decline of social housing. Individual causes include mental health issues, substance abuse, and a lack of family support. The combination of these factors has led to a significant increase in homelessness, particularly in London. It is a problem that requires a multi-faceted approach to solve, including increased investment in social housing, mental health services, and support for vulnerable individuals. The question of why homeless people don't just go home is a complex one, and it is one that we must address if we are to make any real progress in reducing homelessness in London.

In 1991 the cover of the first edition of The Big Issue posed a stark and provocative question: "But why don't the homeless just go home?" Nick Hardwick, then director of the charity for homeless young people Centrepoint, answered in an article identifying factors such as broken family relationships, a desperate shortage of cheap rented accommodation and meagre social security payments. In the last 25 years great progress has been made in helping people up from the streets, raising public awareness of the problem of homelessness and challenging common misconceptions about the forces driving it. But with rough sleeping and statutory homelessness still on the rise in the UK, plainly much more remains to be done. With that in mind, we asked people on the frontline of homelessness provision in the UK the same question again in 2016: why don't the homeless just go home? Here's how they responded.