

Big Issue launches new membership scheme to ask Brits to hit cancel on poverty and unite in midst of poverty crisis

2 years ago



Big Issue Group has launched its first ever membership scheme to unite supporters of the social enterprise in the fight against the UK poverty crisis.

The social enterprise has identified a desire from the UK public to use collective action to change things for people in poverty, with a new YouGov poll¹ showing over two thirds (69%) of people believe issues are more effectively resolved when people and organisations work together on a local scale.

The campaign kicks off with significant outdoor advertising, starting with Elonex's *The Manchester Screen* at Victoria Warehouse, the second largest digital billboard in Europe. Delivering over 1.2 million impressions every two weeks, it is the biggest billboard in the city and overlooks a major traffic junction where campaigns successfully target commuters, public transport users, football fans and visitors to the bustling City Centre. Elonex will be sharing the campaign for the duration of its run, utilising many of its 3,000 digital screens across the UK.

Advertising space has also been secured through December 19 and Clearchannel, Canopy and Global alongside a range of other B2C and B2B advertisers supporting the Big Issue Group to access new audiences.

Out of over 2,000 Brits surveyed in early September, 54% said they felt the government is doing "too little" to help people in their local area who are afflicted by poverty. Close to half (45%) of all respondents believed their local areas had changed for the worse over the last few years, with 42% saying their areas

'had stayed about the same' and only 7% reporting a change for the better – showing a clear need for people to be brought together in the face of the country's sizeable challenges.

In light of these findings, alongside the new membership scheme, the Big Issue Group is launching a new *Big Community* initiative, designed to bring local people together to find solutions to poverty in their areas, and to call for real government action on poverty. The initiative encompasses the membership scheme, a community roadshow, and a call to campaign for bold new government legislation.

The social enterprise is calling for a 'Poverty Zero' law, which would force every government to set legally binding targets to reduce poverty – as with Net Zero. It's estimated that 3.8 million people in the UK live in extreme poverty, struggling to feed, clothe, and keep themselves warm². This has more than doubled in the last 7 years, and the Big Issue Group wants the first ever 'Poverty Zero' law to tie the government to eradicating destitution by 2035.

The first ever Big Community Roadshow will visit Newcastle-upon-Tyne next week, with the social enterprise's various teams based in the city for a week to listen, support and report on overlooked local issues. More dates and locations will be announced in the coming weeks.

The public can back this bold new campaign by signing up to the Big Issue's Membership scheme and enabling the Big Issue to create positive solutions so even more people in the UK can work and earn their way out of poverty – through its support services, work readiness programme and campaigning on behalf of the 3.8m people, to get those in power to do more.

Zoe Hayward, CMO of the Big Issue Group, said: "Poverty in this country is a growing, urgent crisis, destroying our society, affecting more of our neighbours, friends and family every day. The issue is out of control, the government isn't moving fast enough and we at the Big Issue Group, can't look away. We know millions of people in the UK are outraged. We want to bring people together who are demanding change through our new membership scheme.

"Our survey shows people still believe in the power of community, and the Big Issue membership scheme is a way for people to stand together. Through becoming part of our community, we'll amplify the voices of those who are marginalised in our society and show those in power that we won't tolerate their inaction.

"This scheme is exciting new territory for us and I'd like to extend my thanks to all those who have supported us to bring this to market. In particular Fearless Union and Cat Wiles for their support in developing the proposition and cut-through creative for our ambitious launch, together with December 19, Elonex, Canopy and Clearchannel who have helped reach new audiences and many more individuals along the journey."

Mark Champion, Creative Partner at Fearless Union said: "Like it or not, in this broken system we're all members of the poverty problem. A 24/7, 12-month, rolling contract of powerlessness and inaction. The good thing about the poverty problem is, you can leave at any time. This campaign is a huge moment for the Big Issue Group, so it needed a bold and striking statement to shake people awake, whilst also really bringing a new distinctiveness to an iconic brand. It was a pleasure to work so closely with the team at the Big Issue Group to smash poverty and to launch a membership that unlocks opportunities for millions of vulnerable people."

Cat Wiles, said: “With almost 4 million people in the UK living in destitution, enough is enough. We’ve created an unignorable campaign that reconnects the Big Issue with its founding spirit—to spark outrage at injustice—and rallies the nation to take meaningful action”

For 33 years the Big Issue Group has worked to create opportunities for people affected by poverty across the UK. Sandrine Mpongo, a 38-year-old single mother from London, was a long-term benefit claimant who used Big Issue Recruit to find work. Sandrine called her job coach Shak “a really, really big help” with her interview prep. “We were talking every day for a week. He told me I could call him anytime.” Big Issue Recruit also paid for Sandrine’s transport to her job interview, where she successfully secured a role as a catering assistant.

An enduringly popular way for people in extreme poverty to earn an income is by selling the Big Issue. Josh Eardley, age, who sells the magazine on Exeter High Street, said: “I became homeless last spring. I was living in a tent in the Exeter area and I consistently moved around for safety purposes. Fortunately, I saw the end of it and became housed and started selling the Big Issue. It turned out to be a very good thing for me to have started.

“Big Issue is definitely helping me to mobilise parts of my CV. For me, the future is about finding a sustainable route forward.”

To become a Member of the Big Issue, visit bigissue.com/membership.