

Media Release

THE BIG ISSUE IN THE north

23 May 2011

THE BIG ISSUE IN THE NORTH RESPONDS TO MEDIA ARTICLES ABOUT ROMA BIG ISSUE IN THE NORTH VENDORS

This week has seen a number of articles in national newspapers claiming that Roma are selling *The Big Issue in the North* to take advantage of a loophole in the tax system which allows them to claim benefits they wouldn't otherwise be entitled to.

Fay Selvan, Chief Executive of The Big Life group which owns *The Big Issue in the North*, defends the rights of Roma, who have few other means of earning an income, to sell The Big Issue in the North:

"As members of the EU and A2 nationals Romanian Roma's work opportunities in the UK are limited to certain highly skilled jobs, seasonal agricultural work or being self employed.

"Anyone who is self employed is entitled to certain benefits. Selling *The Big Issue in the North* is genuine self employment and we would defend anyone's right to claim a benefit if they are legally entitled to it, regardless of their race."

Roma are described by Amnesty International as among the most deprived communities in Europe. In many countries they suffer widespread discrimination and are denied their rights to housing, employment, health care and education. Roma communities are often subject to forced evictions, racist attacks and police ill-treatment.

"In our experience, the Roma are a hard working community who want to create better lives for themselves and their families." Fay added, "When they come to *The Big Issue in the North* they have few ways of earning an income and therefore securing or maintaining a roof over their and their families' heads."

The same press articles claim that homeless and unemployed UK nationals are not being supported by *The Big Issue in the North*. Fay Selvan says: "This is not the case, we encourage anyone who needs support and wants an opportunity to earn an income by selling The Big Issue in the North to approach us. *The Big Issue in the North* will support anyone vulnerable or in need, regardless of their race or ethnicity."

Ends

Notes to Editors

The Big Issue in the North is a weekly magazine sold by people across the North of England. Vendors buy the magazine for a pound and sell it to their customers for two pounds, keeping the pound profit that they make. All vendors were a badge which lists the pitch they sell on and their vendor number. Vendor numbers should correspond to the number written on the magazines they are selling.

For further information please contact Group Communications Manager, Emma Eaton, on emma.eaton@thebiglifegroup.com or 0161 848 2424.