

HOW CAN BIG ISSUE SELLERS WITH OR VULNERABLE TO NRPFB BUILD A GOOD LIFE IN BRISTOL?

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FORWARD

“This report shows the value of universities and community organisations working in partnership. Migration Mobilities Bristol (MMB <https://migration.bristol.ac.uk/>) were pleased to support the Big Issue in undertaking this project. Research helps us all better understand the consequences of policies, public attitudes, and cultures, and how they find expression in individual’s experiences and dreams. Frontline organisations are uniquely positioned to do this kind of work, because they know the group they work with, understand the social and political context and can build on research to improve lives.

ACH (ach.org.uk) has been pleased to work with the Big Issue in undertaking this research into the needs and aspirations of this significant community which have been overlooked by many for too long. It aligns with our approach that support needs to be tailored to individual needs and in an appropriate cultural and social context and that “one size does not fit all”. It also underlines the fact that the dichotomy between “refugees” and “migrants” where the former flee from persecution and the latter come seeking economic advantage is far too simple. It also shows the value of qualitative research undertaken by front line workers. It will certainly have implications for our services, and we look forward to working with a range of stakeholders and the Roma community in Bristol. “

Professor Bridget Anderson, Director, Migration and Mobilities Bristol, University of Bristol

David Jepson, Director and Policy Advisor, ACH / Himilo

INTRODUCTION

Big Issue is a street magazine founded 30 years ago. Through our social enterprise we support individuals to earn a legitimate income selling the magazine. Our mission is to tackle homelessness, fight social exclusion and provide opportunities and solutions for people who experience poverty in the UK. Our vendors buy the magazine for £1.50 and resell it to the public for £3.00. In Bristol alone, we have over 50 active sellers who come from all walks of life, but most of them are marginalised and socially isolated. Our Romanian Roma vendors comprise a significant proportion of our client group.

Roma are nomadic people who originated from northern India and migrated to Europe between the 8th and 10th century C.E (*Roma (Gypsies) in Prewar Europe, 2019*). They were called “Gypsies” because it was believed that they came from Egypt (*Roma (Gypsies) in Prewar Europe, 2019*). Historically, Roma people have suffered from persecution and oppression. Roma were forced into slavery in Romania and other regions of Europe until the 19th century. During WW2 several countries in Europe ordered their expulsion because they were considered “racially inferior”. Roma are the largest ethnic minority in Europe, living in almost every country in Europe, as well as in America, Asia and North Africa (*The Roma and Open Society, 2019*). It is estimated that there are at least 200,000 Roma in UK, although this is thought to be an underestimate due to their lack of participation in the 2011 census (*UK Parliament, 2017*). Roma face discrimination and barriers when accessing employment, housing, and local services. They also often live with uncertainty about their legal status in the UK (*Loughborough University UK & Ruhama Foundation, 2019*).

In April 2021, after the initial stages of the pandemic and lockdown, we noticed an increase in the number of destitute individuals, mostly non-UK nationals, who reached out for our support. Most of this new client group were Romanian Roma who were temporarily housed through the “Everyone In” initiative but who found themselves rough sleeping and with limited rights after the scheme closed. One of the key reasons for this was that they fall under “NRPF” rules. NRPF stands for “No Recourse to Public Funds” and it is attached to a person’s permission to enter or remain in the UK. Individuals who fall under the NRPF condition are not eligible for many public benefits, including Universal Credit, Social Fund payments, Housing Benefit and social housing and education (*NRPF Network, n.d.*). Last year, 60 people with NRPF were left destitute in Bristol (*Vickers, 2021*).

NRPF is usually associated with asylum seekers and non-EEA citizens. However, European migrants too can be affected by the NRPF condition, particularly when they are still waiting for Home Office decision on their application to the EU Settlement Scheme. People granted pre-settled status but who did not pass the Habitual Residency Test are also subject to NRPF conditions (*NRPF Network, n.d.*) as are individuals with pre-settled status who have not applied on time for Settled Status or Indefinite Leave to Remain.

This research was undertaken to present the NRPF consequences from the perspective of our essential frontline work. The project follows the experiences of our vendors who describe what a “good life” means to them, it highlights the challenges of living in a different country and identifies local solutions to improve the quality of life for NRPF individuals. Our aim for this project was to present each Big Issue seller as a whole person, with their own motivations, aspirations, expectations, needs and barriers, and also to show Bristol that there are important steps and decisions that we can take locally to ensure better support and inclusion for marginalised communities.

The research project took place in three stages:

- **Preparatory stage.** Working with Migration Mobilities Bristol (MMB) we identified our research question and methods and potential ethical issues. We then identified NRPF/NRPF vulnerable clients through vendor engagement workshops held in our Big Issue offices. Clients participated in a set of interactive activities that also discussed their motivations for moving to the UK, their cultural identities, community values, aspirations and accessing services.

- **Interview stage.** We devised an interview schedule with the aim of exploring how participants understood what makes a “good life”, and the barriers that stop them from attaining a better life. Together we explored options and support they can access to better themselves. We used Maslow Hierarchy of Needs and the Bristol Model (*Bristol Refugee Rights & RAMP Project, 2021*) to facilitate a dialogue with participants.
- **Engagement with other services.** We held conversations with several other agencies who work with NRPF migrants in Bristol. These focused on local solutions, starting with the ideas suggested by participants and looking for practical and local actions that better support NRPF groups. The services who contributed towards this solution focused project are St Mungo’s, ACH, Bristol Law Centre, Move in, Move on, Move up, WRAMAS, Wild Goose and Red Cross.

Ten Big Issue sellers aged between 38 and 60 participated in this project, nine from the Romanian Roma community, three women and six men, and one male Jamaican national. At the time of the research, five had pre-settled status and five were awaiting a decision on their immigration application. Again, at the time of the project, participants were in a variety of housing situations, with some rough sleeping, some having previously slept on the streets and some vulnerably housed. Activities and interviews were conducted in Romanian or English. Project participants remained anonymous and oral and written consent was obtained in all cases.

The project was written and coordinated by Paula Gombos, Sales & Support Worker for the Big Issue Bristol with support from Big Issue Group co-workers whose contributions have added great value to the project.

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VENDOR ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOPS

Our research project started with friendly and engaging workshops with the objective being to identify which of our clients are NRPF and which ones could be vulnerable to this condition. Big Issue workers provided a confidential space where participants could express themselves and feel their opinions were important and valuable. The workshops were organized in two sessions: one for Roma vendors and one for the Jamaican national. We wanted to see the similarities and differences in their experiences, without them being influenced by each other in the answers that they gave. They were structured around three activities, designed to allow participants and staff members to openly discuss migration to the UK, along with life experiences, traditions, integration, entitlements and accessing local services.

We started by showing participants pictures of different types of accommodation - small cottages, family houses, mansions, boats, igloos, camper vans or tents in different settings such as countryside, Bristol, river canals, mountains, and we asked them to imagine their ideal home. Two Roma fathers chose a small sized cottage which they saw as a sustainable option for their future, given they intend to continue to live in the city with their families. Other participants chose canal boats, small countryside houses. One participant picked the image of an opulent mansion in the desert. The choices of these participants to reside in remote locations with alternative accommodation was made as they've expressed the need of a quiet home, the desire to escape and have a sense of freedom.



The second activity was met with excitement and an open mind. We prepared a set of questions that started with “On a scale from 1 to 5...”. Every participant was given an envelope containing differently coloured stickers. The facilitator asked questions such as “On a scale from 1 to 5 how much do you enjoy living in Bristol?” or “On a scale from 1 to 5 how welcomed did you feel when you’ve moved to Bristol?”. They were also asked about access to local services, future employment, and other plans. In response to the questions participants placed the stickers on a whiteboard according to where they placed themselves on the scale.

All attendees moved abroad in search of a better quality of life. They discussed why they moved to Bristol, how easy or difficult it is for them to build a life in a different country. We had important conversations around employability, local provisions, immigration, and entitlements. Participants were generally positive about Bristol. They felt it was a city with a great sense of community, where individuals care for one another. One participant described Bristol as *“a clean and quiet city”, “a place that promotes equality, where even the most marginalized communities can thrive together”*. They are embracing Bristol with its culture and enjoy living in

the city. Overall, they feel welcomed here and found that Bristol is a place where they can bring their own traditions. We noted that there is a higher tendency for families to celebrate these.

Support networks were important in facilitating moving to Bristol. Bristol was recommended by other families, friends and fathers moved here first. With the support from the close-knit Roma group, their wife and children then followed. Roma families spend a lot of time together, meet up regularly and occasionally women share childcare and household responsibilities. They offer each other support through financial hardship. Our Jamaican vendor did not have these networks but relied on his friendly personality and by socializing with everybody he easily found his “place” in this city. Our participants tend to live in multicultural neighbourhoods, and this, together with the fact that they sell The Big Issue, said they had friends from all over the world and this is one of the aspects they enjoy about Bristol.

The conversation around local services elicited more division in opinions. Some participants felt confident about accessing the main local provisions, whereas others didn’t know what services were available nor how to access them. Participants were often confused about what services were available to them and felt there was not enough clarity or information about local services. For example, one participant was trying to find out about his welfare entitlements and despite being referred to several services, he still didn’t know whether he had the right to access mainstream benefits. There is not a cohesive message about provisions and information is not tailored to migrants. Notably, our service users see Big Issue as a trusted organisation and they feel comfortable in seeking further guidance and support from us.

Question	1	2	3	4	5
1			1 purple smiley	1 green smiley	1 orange smiley, 1 yellow smiley
2	1 green smiley	1 purple smiley		1 yellow smiley	1 orange smiley
3			1 purple smiley, 1 yellow smiley	1 green smiley	1 orange smiley
4		1 green smiley, 1 purple smiley			1 orange smiley, 1 yellow smiley
5			1 yellow smiley		1 purple smiley, 1 orange smiley, 1 green smiley

When discussing their practical skills and education, there was some hesitation when it came to conversations about future career prospects or employability. The participants did not have confidence in their abilities, language, literacy, digital skills, and this impacts greatly on their self-esteem. While they aspired to other forms of work, such as opening a car wash, a grocery store or even becoming a chef, they are skeptical that there are other jobs that they could do. On a positive note, they are encouraging their children and hope for their future to be different.

For our third and final activity we showed the participants several images of famous landmarks and popular places in Bristol to facilitate a discussion on their relationship with Bristol and their participation within the wider community. We discovered that our attendees felt that they had embraced Bristol including by exploring local tourist attractions such as The Suspension Bridge and St Nick’s Market as well as attending seasonal events such as the German Christmas Market or Harbourside Festival. One participant also shared that they were once a steward at Ashton Gate Stadium and enjoyed their experience being part of the local football community.

The participants explained that they were curious about different cultures around them and felt they had tried to socialize and utilize entertainment opportunities in the area including by eating fish and chips! However, ongoing financial struggles as well as both personal and immediate community related problems had prevented them from maintaining an active engagement in the wider Bristol community.

Sales and Support Worker Sue Lomax noted:

“The NRPF drop-in was extremely successful at putting the interviewees at ease and allowing them to express their thoughts and feelings about living in Bristol, and the support that they can access. The participants seemed to appreciate the effort made in providing food and drink that was culturally appropriate for them, and this facilitated discussion between themselves about the issues being raised by the questions. It gave the participants the ability to open up and speak freely about their hopes and aspirations, which I felt was something that they rarely considered. Although many of the vendors had seen some of the sights of Bristol, it was interesting for me how many of them had not traveled far out of the city centre; quite a few had not seen the suspension bridge, for example. It seemed like many of the participants’ lives were centered around the area that they lived in, and the city centre.

Many of the participants had little or no idea about their rights while living in Britain, or what they were entitled to receive. It was interesting and eye opening to hear of their experiences of struggling to access the help that they needed to survive, regarding healthcare, housing, and financial opportunities. They saw the Big Issue as a means of working and making an immediate income that enables them to sustain an extremely basic standard of living. They also seem wary of contacting anyone that they perceive to be in a position of authority and see the Big Issue as a means of contacting the support that they need without them having to do this themselves. Unpicking some of the reasons behind this and finding solutions to help alleviate some of these difficulties will be really interesting!

CONCLUSION

Overall, the connection and community aspect of the workshops was very positive and the drop in was successful. Our client group clearly want to have more autonomy over their lives, because they live in unsuitable, sometimes unsafe and overcrowded accommodation. Participants are satisfied with their choice of moving to Bristol and they’ve expressed their preference to remain in the country. Our vendors are not actively seeking for other work opportunities, in part because they are pessimistic about what will be open to them in practice, however everyone has an idea of what they would have liked to achieve. They appreciate the immediate financial results that come from selling The Big Issue. While some individuals are more confident than others, our client group needs a fair amount of assistance to access local services. There is a huge gap in their collective knowledge about their individual rights and the support they are entitled to. However, participants feel a sense of belonging in Bristol, they have all engaged in a social activity specifically in Bristol and we would like to continue raising awareness around local events that could be accessible to them.

REFLECTIONS ON A GOOD LIFE

Big Issue vendors come from different walks of life and have unique, incredible stories. For the second part of the research Big Issue clients participated in interviews that focused on having a 'good life' in Bristol. Our mission was to identify elements that would enable individuals with or vulnerable to NRPF to sustain a good life in the city. The aim of the interviews was to discuss and examine all aspects of life, aspirations and hopes, fears and barriers, values and lessons, including integration into a different city and practical solutions to attain a better quality of life. The individual interviews were conducted by the frontline staff members, in Romanian or English and lasted approximately two hours.

We started with a light conversation about their reasons and motivations to move to Bristol and ascertained whether they had any family members or connections here already. We then talked about whether they enjoy living in this city and whether they feel integrated here. We asked participants what integration meant to them, and we searched to define it together. A quick exercise followed, where we asked participants to imagine themselves in the future and to reflect on their lives. It is difficult to reflect from an imaginary future, when your focus is on meeting daily survival needs. Participants expressed regrets and dissatisfaction about their current circumstances, however there was a feeling of wanting to change things for the better.

With everyone we explored the meaning of a "good life" and used Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a reference point. This was a useful resource as we felt that this question was overwhelming participants. The five-tier pyramid model of human needs encouraged them to introduce their own views on having or building a good life in Bristol. We recognise that participants have similar needs such as stable accommodation, legal representation, family closure and developing friendships, healthcare, faith, as well as good employment opportunities, access to information, involvement in the community and feeling appreciated. Half of the participants disclosed that they had to live without basic physiological needs and that some days they did not have access to food, water or shelter. The immediate question was whether participants could think of any solutions to fulfill their primary needs and personal goals. Whilst some felt disheartened and couldn't offer an answer, other had concrete and practical ideas that we will examine in the next section.

We were curious to discover whether they are receiving any support from local services or individuals. Participants identified a few formal agencies such as Big Issue, St Mungo's and Move on, Move in, Move up, and family and friends provided the main support. They encounter multiple barriers when accessing services, not being familiar with local provisions and not knowing how to seek help.

As the interviews carried on, we approached the NRPF condition, and it was not surprising to find that none of the participants knew what the acronym stands for. This was an opportunity to explain to them what NRPF means, that it is subject to immigration status, and that for some individuals, it is only a temporary. We asked participants whether they knew their rights and this question brought confusion and discomfort. One interviewee explained *'No one has ever asked me or has spoken to me about my rights. I know I have a lot of rights in the country, but no one explained them to me'*.

Participants were shown a short paragraph on NRPF statistics as we wanted to know how they felt about it. The paragraph explains that almost 1.4 million people in the UK have no recourse to public funds (NRPF), a number suggested by The Migration Observatory whilst conducting research for Citizen Advice Bureau in 2020⁹. The interviewees felt overwhelmed by this number.

We also presented a more elaborate paragraph on NRPF, taken from “NRPF The Bristol Model”, a research and model developed by Bristol Refugee Rights (BRR) and Refugee, Asylum and Migration Policy (RAMP) Project.

“**The Bristol Model** is based on lived experiences, conversations with professionals and our expertise and sets out what we believe all individuals subject to NRPF in our city should be entitled to. Overall, the Bristol Model aims to provide people with a safety net they need to survive and thrive despite their NRPF status and ensure that no-one in Bristol experiences destitution or homelessness. The Bristol Model is based around 4 key principles:

Design-out Destitution

People must have access to basic goods needed to survive and thrive. This includes food, medicine, sanitary and washing facilities, the means to connect with people digitally and access to public transport.

A Safe Place to Stay

People must have access to accommodation which is safe and secure, and which provides them with privacy and dignity.

Informed and Supported

People must have access to appropriate and specialist legal advice. People must also have access to holistic social and welfare support where needed, and support into employment where they are legally allowed to work.

Included and Involved

People must have the opportunity to tell their story where they choose to, and to be actively involved in the design of relevant support services and advocacy activity”.

In general, participants with these statements, though one interviewee felt that this model would only work for rough sleeping and destitute individuals.

In our final set of questions, we explored interviewees’ values and sense of community, asking whether and how they would like to help others achieve a better quality of life. All agreed that only together we can thrive and prosper. Participants showed no sign of individualism, and everyone thought that by helping or lifting each other up, we can build a better life, not just for ourselves, but for everyone around us. Several shared stories of times when they have supported other individuals in crisis. Although right now they feel like they do not have the right tools to assist others in Bristol, because of limited English skills and financial instability, they believe that once their current situation changes for the better, this will enable them to support others. We concluded the interviews on a positive note.

KEY FINDINGS

- **Motivations** for moving to the UK were focused around having a family member or knowing someone already residing in the UK. None of the participants moved directly to Bristol from their home country, Bristol was a choice made later in their journey. Almost all established themselves in Bristol with the intention of ‘bettering their future’, with one participant leaving their home country for safety reasons. They enjoy living in this city and some call it “home”.
- **‘Integration’** was not understood immediately by participants, however after a further conversation with them, participants associated integration with a **‘feeling of belonging’, ‘of adapting’ or ‘living, surviving in a different country’**. One participant related to integration as ‘assimilation’ directed by governmental bodies however also as ‘independence’ from community. More than one individual identified that selling The Big Issue has helped them to know their local communities and integrate. Half of the participants mentioned they feel integrated in Bristol.

“Integration has two definitions - one made by the government, so when “Integrate someone in someone else’s plan” and one made by the individual - Integration is when you’re at liberty to live in a self-sufficient way, Integration is when you don’t depend on anyone to live, integration happens when I can be myself and be independent, but when I can also live within the community. “For me integration in Bristol means somewhere to live without thinking I must pay rent, without thinking I have to beg. When you have something to offer, then that’s when you’re integrated.”

- Psychological needs were identified as most important in **what makes a ‘good life’**; relationships, friendships, self-esteem, appreciation, belonging, as well as helping others to feel a sense of “reward”. Housing, knowing your rights, employability opportunities, access to healthcare and fundamental needs were also major elements of a ‘good life’. Referring to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, we have identified 10 Basic Needs, 19 Psychological Needs and 6 Self-Fulfillment Needs.
- The participants whom we’ve interviewed want to **contribute** and be **involved** in the social and economic aspects of life in Bristol, however destitution has impacted their confidence. Low self-esteem hinders their engagement in the community or developing networks.
- Most of the participants had fallen into **precarious employment**, where they felt unfulfilled and without any opportunity to develop skills. Some emphasized the need for a decent job and indicated certain careers they had aspired to, such as a politician, community support officer, seamstress, chef or working in construction, however they did not have the opportunity to practice their skills
- Participants stated that they **do not know** how local services operate and how to access these. They are not familiar with local provisions and rely more on their support network to find accommodation, jobs, register to GP or opening bank accounts. There are people in the community who offer advice, but they don’t always sufficiently understand how the immigration and welfare systems work
- The main **barriers** in accessing employment or other services are language, low digital, numeracy, or literacy skills, poor physical or mental health, addictions, lack of trust, lack of knowledge of services and confusion of the referral system within provisions
- All participants agree that individuals can **thrive** better when they are part of a certain **community** and they have realized their potential only when supporting others to overcome collective struggles
- Interviewees **aspire**, but have **no immediate or future plans**; they experience a **survival mode**, taking each day as it comes
- When exploring **solutions** participants suggested positive mindset, accessibility of services available, destitution payments, legal employment and active participation in the local decision-making process

CONCLUSION

The interviews have revealed the day-to-day reality of individuals who experience NRPF. What stops them from attaining a better quality of life is a permanent feeling of concern about housing, personal safety and sustenance. As a result of the NRPF condition, many individuals are unable to take control of their lives, and this has a major negative impact on their general wellbeing. We realize that integration has multiple meanings, because it is determined by everyone's life experiences and encompasses their day-to-day activities, beliefs, cultures and traditions. Some participants suggested that being a person with no social status has left them in a position where they feel disadvantaged and isolated.

Although our participants' journeys through life have been paved with obstacles, they only want to lead a peaceful life. What gives them resilience is their faith as well as showing a positive mindset, although the latter could be seen as a coping strategy. Throughout the research, our intention is to present Big Issue vendors as remarkable human beings, as we do not believe they represent a problem or a burden on society. In the next section, we will explore, and present, solutions suggested by our clients and other external organizations.



LOCAL SOLUTIONS

The final part of the project focuses on local solutions that could enable NRPF individuals to thrive in the city and explores practical steps that frontline workers can take to promote a better quality of service. Our vendors also contributed to this as it was essential to understand the struggles they experience and the challenges they must overcome daily. The NRPF condition leaves people destitute, unmotivated, and economically unproductive. Some individuals end up begging or turning to alcohol or substance misuse as an escape, which in turn affects their mental health and wellbeing. The reflective interviews identified the barriers to support experienced by this cohort of clients and we presented them to several local services. Together with other experienced frontline workers we came up with ideas that could significantly improve the quality of living for these individuals.

What stops people with or vulnerable to NRPF to create a good life in Bristol?

- Being homeless or vulnerably housed, without a place to call it “home”
- Destitution and no welfare support, at times being unable to access basic needs
- Not knowing how to navigate through local services or understand referral system
- Being unaware or uninformed of their entitlements
- No links to a support network and being away from family members
- Not accessing employment, education because of their lack of skills, poor physical health, or restrictions due to immigration
- Being marginalised, feeling unsafe and not included

Project participants were encouraged to voice their opinions about accessing provisions and to think of simple local solutions to help them take control of their lives and better themselves. We’ve initiated a discussion with the participants about what Bristol can do to impact their lives in a positive way, but also what steps should they take to develop and grow as a person in the city. They’ve suggested the following:

- Improving English skills, and learning how to read and write
- Having a purpose and a job is important and gives people stability in life
- Accessible employment for rough sleepers and individuals with little numeracy, literacy, digital skills or for people in poor health
- Having a voice and being actively involved in local decision-making processes
- Advocacy and legal representation at a local level
- Better care and triage system within local provisions
- Having regular access to interpreters when attending appointment at local services
- Less prejudices and less bureaucracy for individuals with very little documentation
- Safer, cleaner and more suitable housing provisions
- Better protection and safety from Bristol police
- “City work platform” - daily jobs for the City Council such as cleaning, recycling, gardening distributed amongst rough sleepers to help them contribute in the city and solve anti-social behavior

In an attempt to identify solutions at a local level we have collaborated with other professionals who work with individuals with NRPF and for this we have discussed with: **David Jepson (ACH)**, **Marta Keczerska** and **Amy Wadsworth** (St Mungo's), **Mike Booker** (Bristol Law Centre), **Richard Davies** (Move in, Move on, Move Up), **Erin Lawson** (WRAMAS), **Katie Warner** (Immigration Advisor OISC Level 3), **Naomi Millard** (Wild Goose), **Matthew Parsons** (Wild Goose), **Qerim Nuredini** (Red Cross).

When examining solutions, we analyzed immigration matters, employability, housing, accessing information or services, integration and the importance of the community in Bristol. As professionals who engage daily with people in crisis, we recognize our clients' ability to survive, however we consider that it should be Bristol's mission to ensure this group of individuals are leading a decent life in the city. These are a few steps that Bristol can take to ensure people are prospering:

Immigration

- **Local community legal education:** Training for frontline professionals to better engage with migrant communities, to enable workers to understand immigration matters in order transfer that information to their client group
- **Awareness of application for Settled Status & Indefinite Leave to Remain:** Professionals to be aware of deadlines and application processes to prevent clients from falling further into NRPF and to make appropriate referrals on time.
- **“Know your rights” Workshops:** In person community events held by advisors who can speak the clients' native languages

Housing

- **Long term housing options:** Schemes like Winter Pressures are short term solutions, which only few really benefit from; people can engage better with services, once their fundamental right for shelter is met
- **More self-contained flats and affordable private renting:** Once a job is secured, Credit Union offers a loan that can cover costs for deposit, rent and it's payable in two years' time
- **A larger platform of local hosts** providing accommodation for NRPF individuals whilst continuing to engage and receive comprehensive support from key workers

Employment and Education

- **Regular Community Learning Programmes:** Interactive ESOL Classes, reading, writing, digital skills groups to be held in an accessible space where clients feel most comfortable and to be run in a non-academic way
- **Regular Employability or Careers Sessions** organised by participants who have been through a successful employment programme or by coaches who speak their native language. These sessions should include information on the benefits of legal employment: sick pay, pension, creating a paper trail, and advice on the risks of precarious employment. In addition to this, coaching support should be offered to identify specific needs and barriers to employment or training.
- **Employability organisations** to network with local entrepreneurs or large companies such as NHS, Bristol Waste or hotel chains to explore available opportunities for rough sleepers and create referral system, providing clients continue to engage with day centres to make use of their shower, laundry facilities and canteen
- **Local schemes that link housing with employment:** an example could be Living in Hotel Workers, live-in carers, live-in farm workers

Community

- **Community events:** Local authority and supporting agencies to organize events to celebrate migrant communities, to continue to embrace different cultures or traditions to bring people together
- **Focus on inclusivity:** community centres to continue to develop and organise activities for non-English speakers such as gardening, cooking sessions, as well as non-verbal activities like movies, yoga sessions, art workshops
- **Peer to peer sessions:** Safe, non-judgmental, and confidential sessions where individuals from the same cultural backgrounds can discuss their experiences

Information and Support

- **Community Link Workers:** Funding for floating bilingual advocates who can act as a bridge between local provisions and the client group. This would build trust between the vulnerable group and services and encourages individuals to access settings independently
- **NRPF map:** Visual aid with steps to take when arriving in Bristol, which will include photos and description of services
- **Flexible frontline work:** Professionals to practice outreach regularly for individuals who are unable to commit to appointments to ensure the clients' needs are met
- **Holistic approach:** A comprehensive plan to be followed once the client is housed, this can include setting a financial and budgeting plan, employability, social prescribing, welfare checks as well as coaching and motivational sessions
- **Embassy and Consulate:** Local authority to create relationships with Local Consulates and National Embassies to assist migrants with documentation and IDs

We take pride in the work that we accomplish as Big Issue Frontline Professionals. Our service is open and inclusive of everyone who wants to register as a vendor, and we are much more than a magazine. When our vendors choose a place to sell the magazine, they become part of that neighbourhood and its community. Through selling the magazine they become financially independent and develop a strong set of skills, such as communication or organisational skills, along with improving their numeracy or digital skills. At Big Issue we offer our client group the right tools to navigate through local systems or services and we celebrate them by sharing their stories in the magazine. Most importantly, our sellers identify a new purpose that brings a new structure in their lives which ultimately grows their confidence and self-worth.

CONCLUSION

We believe that the solutions presented above could make a successful local response in supporting individuals with or vulnerable to NRPF and can positively impact their lives in the city. Housing is paramount for their safety, wellbeing, and civic engagement. Besides the obvious need for better care from local provisions and changes in national policies, it is essential to remind ourselves that people who are NRPF want to belong to a certain space or community, where they are seen and heard, as well as feeling a sense of accomplishment or purpose in their lives. Bristol should be a leading city in inclusivity, innovation in tackling social injustice and poverty. At a national level, we consider that the NRPF condition should be scrapped, and national policies changed for individuals to secure suitable accommodation, become economically active as well as having access to mainstream benefits. We hope that the local authority will play an active role in putting pressure on the central government for policies to be amended. However, there are still significant steps that we can develop locally to become more welcoming: a commitment to funding for services who work with NRPF individuals, such as employability, community learning,

or immigration agencies, alternative housing options, frontline services tailored to this cohort, frequent multi agency meetings and a focus on civic involvement in the community. Qerim Nuredini mentioned *“It’s almost impossible for someone that is sleeping rough and hungry to focus or think beyond food and warmth and safety, when they have to deal with an incredible bureaucratic and complex immigration system”*

Big Issue will carry on fighting against social exclusion, poverty and we pledge to continue supporting the most marginalised and vulnerable people in the community, however everyone living in Bristol should be responsible for making this city a better place for others.

NEXT STEPS

Big Issue frontline workers in Bristol will continue to work closely with ACH in the following year. We would like to focus our efforts into organising training and careers advice sessions with Roma clients. Together with external supporting agencies and employment advisors, we hope to run workshops to encourage the Roma client group to become economically active. Workshops will include informative sessions on the advantages of legal employment with discussions around professional aspirations and motivations. We hope this future project will be successful in removing some barriers and challenges Roma people face when accessing employment opportunities.

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