

**BIG  
ISSUE  
RECRUIT**

Creating  
opportunities  
for people to  
**Earn, Learn  
and Thrive.**

**Big Issue Recruit Report**  
October 2023 – September 2024



Shak Dean, Big Issue Recruit Job Coach

# Introduction from Managing Director Catherine Parsons



■ For over 30 years, Big Issue Group has worked to dismantle poverty by creating opportunities for people to earn, learn and thrive. Big Issue Recruit builds on this experience: it is a specialist recruitment agency enabling people, who may face barriers, to find and keep work.

In the last two years we have learnt that the transition into work can be challenging, and so we provide candidates and employers with support before, during and after recruitment with a focus on improving the skills and confidence of candidates and the retention rates for our employer partners.

We know that across the UK there is a massive demand for candidates across

many sectors: between September and November employers were recruiting to over 800,000 job vacancies and there are currently 1.57 million people aged 16-64 who are unemployed.

Big Issue Recruit wants to be part of the solution to this challenge in the year ahead. We will deliver person-centred coaching to 100's of people and continue to work with employers to design bespoke recruitment and retention solutions. In 2025 we plan to work more closely with training providers to deliver access to sector specific certificates and qualification, and to work in partnership with devolved authorities and governments, enabling us to deliver better employment outcomes across the UK.

# The Impact of Big Issue Recruit

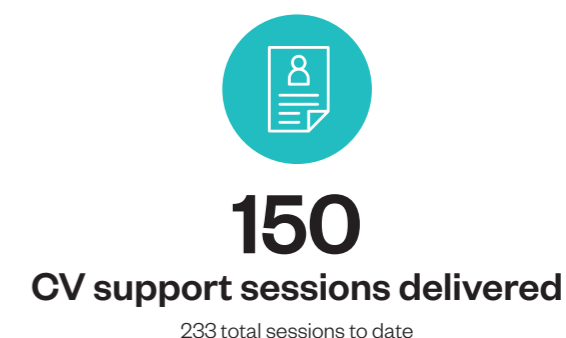
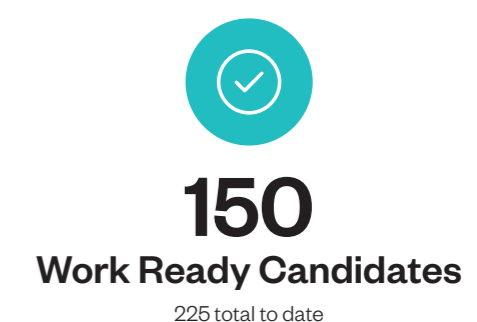
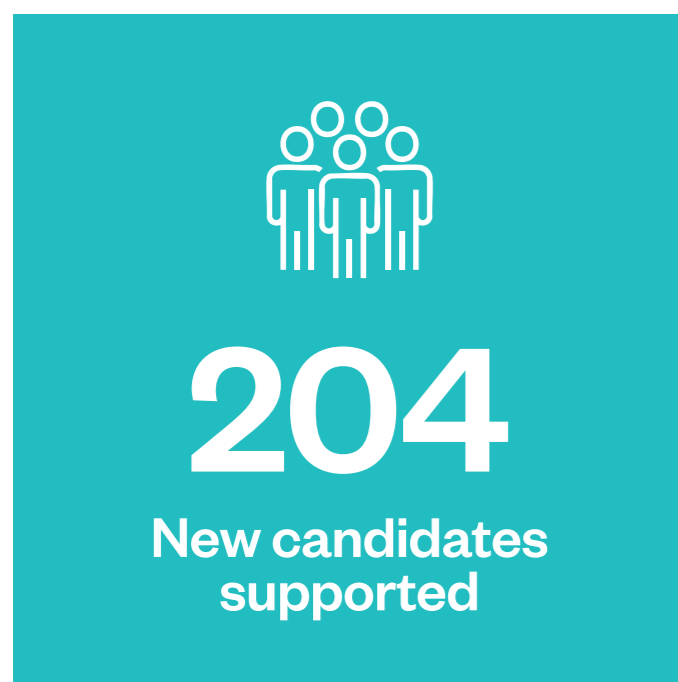
■ Big Issue Recruit (BIR) has been delivering impact for candidates and partners since it launched in September 2022.

In its second year of operating, BIR supported 204 new job candidates. This means that BIR has worked with 385 people to date. Of those candidates supported, BIR helped 47 to find new employment opportunities between October 2023 and September 2024, taking the total number of candidates placed into new employment to 120.

BIR Job Coaches work closely with all candidates to ensure they are upskilled in appropriate areas and equipped with the tools required to successfully move into, and sustain, employment. When Job Coaches are confident that candidates are ready to successfully take the next step, the candidate will be deemed to have achieved 'Work Ready' status. Between October 2023 and September 2024, 150 candidates have achieved Work Ready status, taking the total number who have achieved this status to 225.

Big Issue Recruit's Ready to Work status covers the following key areas:

- 1. Foundational** - Housing, health & addiction, citizenship, financial & digital inclusion.
- 2. Essential** - Financial & digital skills, numeracy, literacy, listening, speaking, problem-solving, creativity, staying positive, aiming high, leadership, teamwork.
- 3. Employability** - CVs & applications, online personal brand, professional behaviours, work experience.
- 4. Technical and industry specific** - Online courses (safeguarding etc.), certification (CSCS card etc.), sector-based work academy programmes (SWAPs), sector specific (barista training etc.).
- 5. Resilience and confidence building** - Interview preparation, self-confidence, self-motivation.



# The Fundamental Pillars of Big Issue Recruit

## Big Issue Recruit has three fundamental pillars:

- BIR works with people who are eager to work, and often have valuable skills and experience but require some support to find the right opportunities, and to be successful in a recruitment process.
- BIR works closely with employers to understand their recruitment needs and organisational culture. We can support these needs with a range of offers including a pay and place model, in-work support to improve retention, temp to perm and outsourcing.
- BIR is committed to robust social impact reporting, enabling our employment partners to evidence the social value created by using Big Issue Recruit compared to other agencies, enhancing their Corporate and Social Responsibility profile.



# How Big Issue Recruit Works

■ Big Issue Recruit supports candidates who want to work but face barriers such as returning to work after a period of caring responsibility or ill-health, digital exclusion, or lack of sector-specific qualifications.

**1.**

Our candidates are referred to us by national referral partners such as the Department for Work and Pensions, HM Prison & Probation Service, Royal British Legion, Crisis plus a wide variety of local service providers.

**2.**

Job Coaches provide one-to-one pre-employment support to candidates, including a strengths-based assessment to understand people's individual circumstances. We offer coaching to build skills and confidence, whilst also addressing practical barriers such as housing, childcare, financial and digital skills, supporting with creating a CV, and interview skills.

**3.**

Our lead recruiter works with a range of employer partners in retail, logistics, health and social care, micro-mobility and environmental management and we are always looking to develop new relationships with employers. As well as access to a large pool of work-ready candidates, we offer a range of recruitment solutions including managing outsourced contracts and 'temp to perm' arrangements. We work with employers to understand their needs and match the right candidates to vacancies, supporting them through the recruitment process.

**4.**

BIR carries out workplace assessments with both candidate and employer prior to employment, ensuring both parties are happy and comfortable before moving forward. This is a key step in sustaining placements and reducing turnover.

**5.**

Once a candidate moves into employment BIR job coaches are available to support through regular check-ins for up to 12-weeks. Candidates have regular touch points and the opportunity to raise any issues related to the challenge of moving into employment. BIR job coach also supports the employer with any issues arising during this transitional period, giving the candidate the best chance of remaining in their new position. This tailored support package has meant we have been able to retain 90% of candidates in our first year of business.



# “Collaboration with Big Issue Recruit has been invaluable”

Whether it is through supporting candidates or working closely with employers, Big Issue Recruit has had no shortage of positive feedback.

**Danielle Stavrakis**  
Talent Acquisition Partner at C&C Group

“Our partnership with Big Issue Recruit programme has been incredibly positive for C&C Group. It has allowed us to fill critical gaps in our workforce while providing meaningful opportunities to individuals facing barriers to employment. The candidates have been brilliant, and the support and professionalism of the Big Issue team has been outstanding. The team work tirelessly to ensure a smooth and effective process, offering constant support and dialogue to our business and the candidates. Big Issue Recruit is now one of our key channels to engage and attract diverse talent and I love working on a programme that gives people the opportunity to rebuild their life and get back to work, in an independent but very supported way”

**Mark Atkins**  
Fleet Operations Manager at Tier-dott

“Since launching operations in Bristol and Bath in September 2023, ‘Tier’—now ‘Tier-dott’—has established a strong and collaborative partnership with the Big Issue Recruit team. This partnership has encompassed various projects, including pre-launch support, such as vehicle preparation for deployment, and ongoing operational assistance. Big Issue Recruit’s dedicated local team has consistently contributed to a wide range of tasks, helping to drive our daily operations forward.

Over time, this relationship has evolved and strengthened, adapting to meet our changing needs. Notably, two members of the Big Issue Recruit team have transitioned to permanent roles within the Tier-dott team, extending their valued contributions to our success.”

**Maggie\***  
Big Issue Recruit Candidate

“After my relocation to the UK due to a family bereavement, I faced countless rejections, after numerous applications and interviews. In my dejected and near hopeless state, I met Shak of Big Issue Recruit in a job fair. His motivational style is magical. He has the right words that lifts you out of every situation. Shak has been a pillar of support throughout my job search process. His guidance not only helped refine my applications and interview skills, but also kept me motivated when setbacks felt overwhelming. I’ve gained the confidence to keep pushing forward and now see real progress in my job search, thanks to his consistent encouragement.”

**Laura Roberson**  
Recruitment Lead at Change Grow Live

“The collaboration with Big Issue Recruit has been invaluable, enabling us to successfully place individuals with lived experience into roles within Change Grow Live services. Their unique perspectives and empathy have greatly enhanced the support we provide to those accessing our services, making a meaningful difference in their journeys.”

**Kate\***  
Big Issue Recruit Candidate

“I wanted to thank you for all the support you have given me with my CV and interview preparation. Your patience and advice have really made a difference, and I am so grateful for the positive energy you brought to each session. I feel truly lucky to have had your guidance through this process. Your support has boosted my confidence and given me the motivation to keep going.”

**Candidate stories**  
Mokhammed

“I was very happy when I got the job. I said to Shak: ‘Thank you for your help. I’m very happy. You helped me and it worked.’”



\*Candidate names changed for anonymity

# The Social Value of Big Issue Recruit

■ Since launch, Big Issue Recruit has understood the importance of being able to express its work and impact through the means of social valuation. Social valuation measures the positive (and negative) value created by businesses through their operations and services that can benefit the economy, communities, and individuals.

Big Issue Recruit has established a social value framework which is used to express our impact through monetary value using financial proxies.

In its second year of operations Big Issue Recruit is estimated to have delivered

## £853,000

of attributed social value.



BIR's social cost/benefit ratio was £1 : £3.11 or, **for every £1 spent on operational costs £3.11 of social value was delivered.**

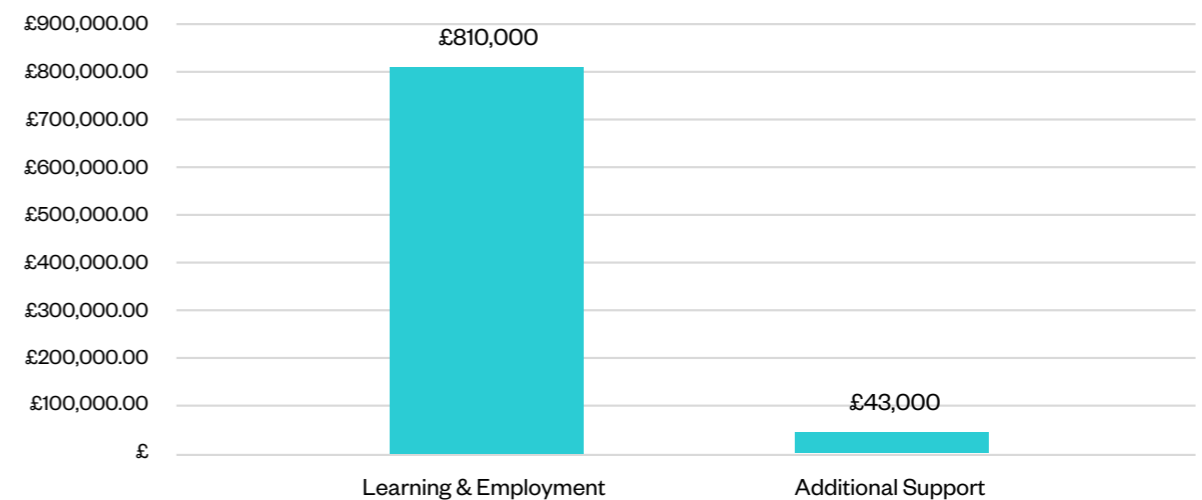
## Overall Social Value

■ These new figures for year two mean that in its first two years of operations, Big Issue Recruit has delivered £2 million of social value through its work at a ratio of £1 : £3.74.

For the purposes of this social cost / benefit analysis, the outcomes achieved by Big Issue Recruit candidates are broken down across Big Issue Group's five impact pillars: Learning & Employment, Housing, Health &

Wellbeing, Financial & Digital Inclusion and Community & Environment. Big Issue Recruit's impact is predominantly focused in the Learning & Employment pillar, with additional support being provided to candidates across the remaining four pillars.

Big Issue Recruit's Attributed Social Value in Year 2



# The Social Value of Big Issue Recruit

## Learning & Employment

Big Issue Recruit’s goal is to support individuals out of unemployment and into sustainable work, each instance of BIR being successful in this brings significant social value, through income to the individual and savings to the Treasury. BIR created a social value of £433,000 in direct benefit to our successfully placed candidates and £263,000 in fiscal benefit to the Exchequer.

Also, of significant value is supporting ex-offenders to not reoffend and return to prison. Preventing re-offending can bring a cost saving to the state and BIR is able to create social value

by supporting ex-offenders into employment. This year, BIR supported seven ex-offenders into work, creating £81,000 of social value based on a recidivism rate of 24%.

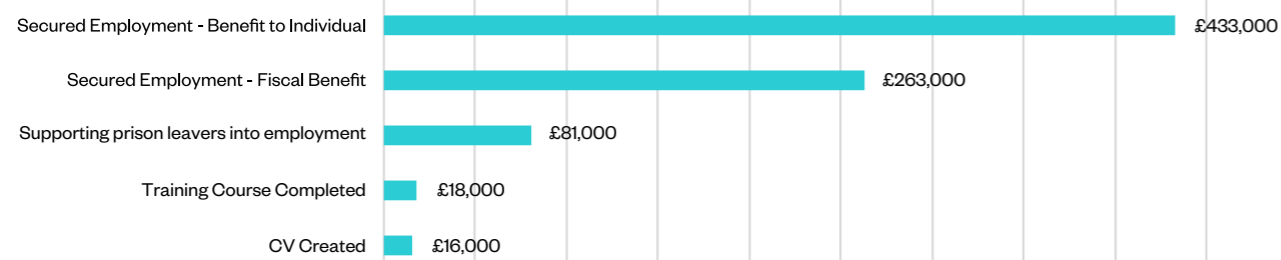
Accounting for all outcomes achieved and applying appropriate discounts, a social value of £810,000 was achieved in the impact area of Employment.

## Additional support

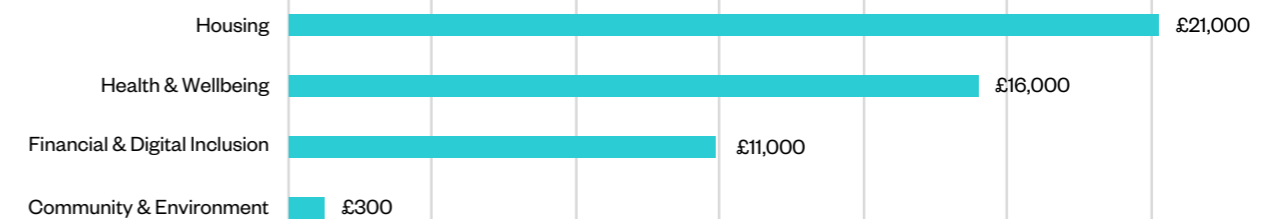
To ensure candidates are setup for success, BIR provides additional support to help candidates address their foundational needs.

By supporting candidates to find secure places to live and access relevant health services, when needed, BIR ensures that all candidates are able to achieve their potential without having to deal with the potential negative impacts of losing a home or not being able to see a doctor. Last year, this additional support contributed to creating a further £43,000 of social value.

Learning & Employment - Attributed Social Value



Additional Support - Attributed Social Value







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Photo: Matthew Horwood / Rory Lindsay