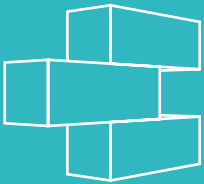


# BIG ISSUE RECRUIT

## Year 1 Impact Report







# Executive summary

We launched Big Issue Recruit in September 2022, with a very clear objective: to give marginalised people the same access to job opportunities as everyone else. We seized an opportunity and launched in a job market where there were as many people seeking work as there were vacancies. We worked alongside our wonderful founding partners O&C Group and Permira, placing candidates like Lee in warehousing roles and Sandrine as a catering assistant.

We developed opportunities in Bristol and Bath and tested our own operation, supporting Tier to deliver micro mobility solutions to the West of England Combined Authority. We employed an initial team of 10 who supply warehousing, rebalancing, foot patrol and maintenance support to Tier and we anticipate this growing as their fleet does.

Towards the end of our first year, we opened up new partnerships with national operators in sectors like hospitality and care. We were well on our way to our target of placing 100 people and excited about securing sustainable work for excellent candidates like Farley. We have demonstrated that we can grow and

adapt to a range of requirements and sectors successfully and are confident that we have a formula capable of reaching our objective.

However, we are mindful of the growing skills gap in the UK. At the end of our first year, the market looked very different with the rate of unemployment in the UK at 4.2%, and 1.45 million people unemployed<sup>1</sup>. Unemployment levels increased by 206,000 on the year and with vacancies contracting, the number now standing at 1 million job vacancies in the UK<sup>2</sup> and with 531,200 skill-shortage vacancies (SSVs) in 2022, more than twice the corresponding number in 2017 (226,500)<sup>3</sup>, the experience and approach taken from Big Issue Recruit shows we can get the right people with the right skills into sustainable employment.

In 2024, we will be tackling this issue head on by furnishing candidates with the right skills for the current labour market and seeking partners who want to work in innovative ways to fill their vacancies and enable people with barriers to employment to find jobs of the future.

**Katy Wright**

Director, Big Issue Recruit

(1) Employment in the UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)  
(2) Employment in the UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)  
(3) [https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/employer-skills-survey#:~:text=Overall%20there%20were%20531%2C200%20skill%2Dshortage%20vacancies%20\(SSVs\)%20in%202022%2C%20more%20than%20twice%20the%20corresponding%20number%20in%202017%20\(226%2C500\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/employer-skills-survey#:~:text=Overall%20there%20were%20531%2C200%20skill%2Dshortage%20vacancies%20(SSVs)%20in%202022%2C%20more%20than%20twice%20the%20corresponding%20number%20in%202017%20(226%2C500))



# Introduction

Big Issue Recruit is part of the Big Issue Group and for over 30 years, Big Issue Group has worked to dismantle poverty by creating opportunity. We have a legacy of supporting marginalised people generate their own income and there has never been a greater need to change lives through enterprise. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and amidst a cost-of-living crisis, the UK is facing record levels of poverty and inequality, with close to 15 million people in the UK trapped in poverty<sup>4</sup>.

When we launched Big Issue Recruit (BIR), unemployment had fallen to its lowest level in 30 years: with 1.26m unemployed people actively seeking work, for the first time there were more job vacancies to fill than people seeking employment. One year on, the situation is tougher. Unemployment

has climbed back up to 1.45 million as post pandemic schemes have fallen away and vacancies have shrunk to 950K, exacerbating the issues for people facing barriers to employment.

There is an ever more urgent need for an upskilled workforce. BIR, which aims to bring people from a more diverse range of backgrounds through supported employment pathways into the job market, is more relevant than ever.

BIR is a specialist recruitment service, dedicated to supporting people who face barriers to join the workforce into sustainable employment. It is a person-centred service and free to candidates, supporting individuals pre, during and post-employment.

Big Issue Recruit officially launched on 26th September 2022.



(4) [www.jrf.org.uk/data/overall-uk-poverty-rates](http://www.jrf.org.uk/data/overall-uk-poverty-rates)

## The Fundamental Pillars of Big Issue Recruit

**Inclusive Recruitment**

**Development of People & Culture**

**Evaluation & Development**

# 1

BIR works with those individuals furthest from the job market and supports them into sustainable work. The service is inclusive and excludes nobody from accessing the support and training they need.

# 2

BIR works closely with employer partners to understand their culture and practices and support them to make the changes that can enable the growth and development of their organisations. Through this work BIR is ensuring employers are best placed to support its job candidates.

# 3

BIR is committed to robust social impact reporting which allows for the continuous evaluation and development of its service as well as evidencing to partners the social impact they are enabling BIR to deliver.

# How Big Issue Recruit works



Big Issue Recruit works closely with both candidate referral partners and employment partners to ensure a constant flow of individuals looking for employment opportunities are quickly matched with suitable roles.

We work with major 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 to offer a nationwide service. We work with candidates who want to (re)enter the workplace but face barriers. Candidates include Big Issue magazine vendors, those with skills gaps, people experiencing social, health, financial or digital exclusion and those needing additional flexibilities.

Support for both candidates and employers is split into two distinct periods: pre-employment and during employment support. Job coaches provide one-to-one dedicated pre-employment support which will typically last approximately six weeks. During this time candidates undertake a strengths-based assessment to understand their individual circumstances.

Job coaches support candidates to become work ready, offering employability coaching and opportunities to build skills, confidence and resilience in a person-centred way. Further support is provided to remove barriers to work such as issues with housing, wellbeing, health and addiction, citizenship, and financial and digital

inclusion. Once a candidate is work ready, they are coached through the selection and application process helping them to establish a great relationship with their new employer.

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 the risk of churn. Then key staff and hiring managers are offered BIR's Enabling Success training to build the resilience of the team and support network for our candidates.

Once a candidate moves into employment, BIR job coaches are available to support through regular check-ins for up to 12-weeks. This is to ensure candidates have regular touch points and the opportunity to raise any issues related to the change of moving into employment. BIR job coaches are on hand to support with any issues arising during this transitional period, giving the candidate the best chance of remaining in their new position.

Our during employment support service also ensures that each employer has regular contact with the job coach where they can discuss the placements and access expert support. This tailored support package has meant we have been able to retain 90% of candidates in employment in our first year of business.

## Further support is provided to remove barriers to work such as issues with:



Health and  
Addiction



Housing



Financial and  
Digital Inclusion



Citizenship



Wellbeing



**90%**  
of candidates  
retained in  
our first year of  
business





# Achievements

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

In our first year of trading, BIR received 257 candidate referrals, a combination of self-referrals and partner referrals, of which 109 candidates have been registered with the service and have received support from BIR Job Coaches<sup>5</sup>.

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. To date, 75 candidates have achieved Ready to Work status.

Upon achieving Work Ready status candidates can then be put forward for the vacancies BIR is currently recruiting for on behalf of its employer partners. 80 candidates have so far been put forward for vacancies, with 43 securing employment.

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

**1 Foundational** – Housing, health & addiction, citizenship, financial & digital inclusion.

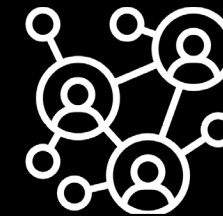
**2 Essential** – Financial & digital skills, numeracy, literacy, listening, speaking, problem-solving, creativity, staying positive, aiming high, leadership, teamwork.

**3 Employability** – CVs & applications, online personal brand, professional behaviours, equity, diversity & inclusion, work experience.

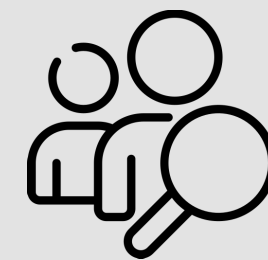
**4 Technical and industry specific** – Online courses (safeguarding etc.), certification (OSCS card etc.), sector-based work academy programmes (SWAPs), sector specific (barista training etc.)

**5 Resilience and confidence building** – our own programme to be developed.

(5) Unfortunately, many of the individuals who have been referred to BIR have not found themselves in the best personal circumstances to be able to engage with the service and therefore, the number of registered candidates is lower than the total number of referrals. In these cases, BIR will onward refer individuals to support from other parts of Big Issue Group or other external partners.



**257**  
Candidate Referrals



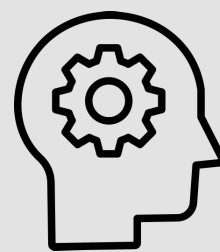
**109**  
Candidates Registered



**43**  
Candidates placed into work



**80**  
Candidates put forward for vacancies



**75**  
Candidates Achieving Work Ready Status





# 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 can be used to demonstrate the monetary social value of its work using financial proxies. These proxies have been influenced by previous Social Return on Investment work carried out by Big Issue Group<sup>6</sup>.

For the purposes of this social cost/benefit analysis, the outcomes achieved by BIR candidates were split into four distinct impact areas: Employment, Wellbeing, Work Readiness and Additional Support. Below are the social value figures achieved in each impact area.

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

**£755,000**

in social value (after discount rates were applied<sup>4</sup>.)

With a total cost base of £278,000 this means BIR’s social cost/benefit ratio was £1 : £2.72 or, for every £1 spent on operational costs £2.72 of social value was delivered.

(6) BIR plans to carry out a full Social Return on Investment analysis in the coming year. The social value outlined in this report has borrowed from the work of previous SROI work of Big Issue Group to establish a less rigorous social cost/benefit value which should be taken as indicative representation of BIR social value.  
(7) October 10 2023  
(8) Changes in wellbeing were valued using Mental Health and Life Satisfaction: The Relationship between the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale and Life Satisfaction by HACT and Daniel Fujiwara (www.hact.org.uk).

**Impact Area: Employment**

The impact area of employment was responsible for a large majority of BIR’s total social value, and this is no surprise. BIR’s goal is to support individuals out of unemployment and into sustainable work, and each instance of BIR being successful in this brings significant social value as income to the individual and savings to the Treasury. BIR claims a social valuation of more than £23,500 for each candidate moved into full-time employment, falling to more than £15,000 following discounts being applied. In its first year, BIR supported 31 candidates into full-time employment and a further 12 candidates in part-time employment.

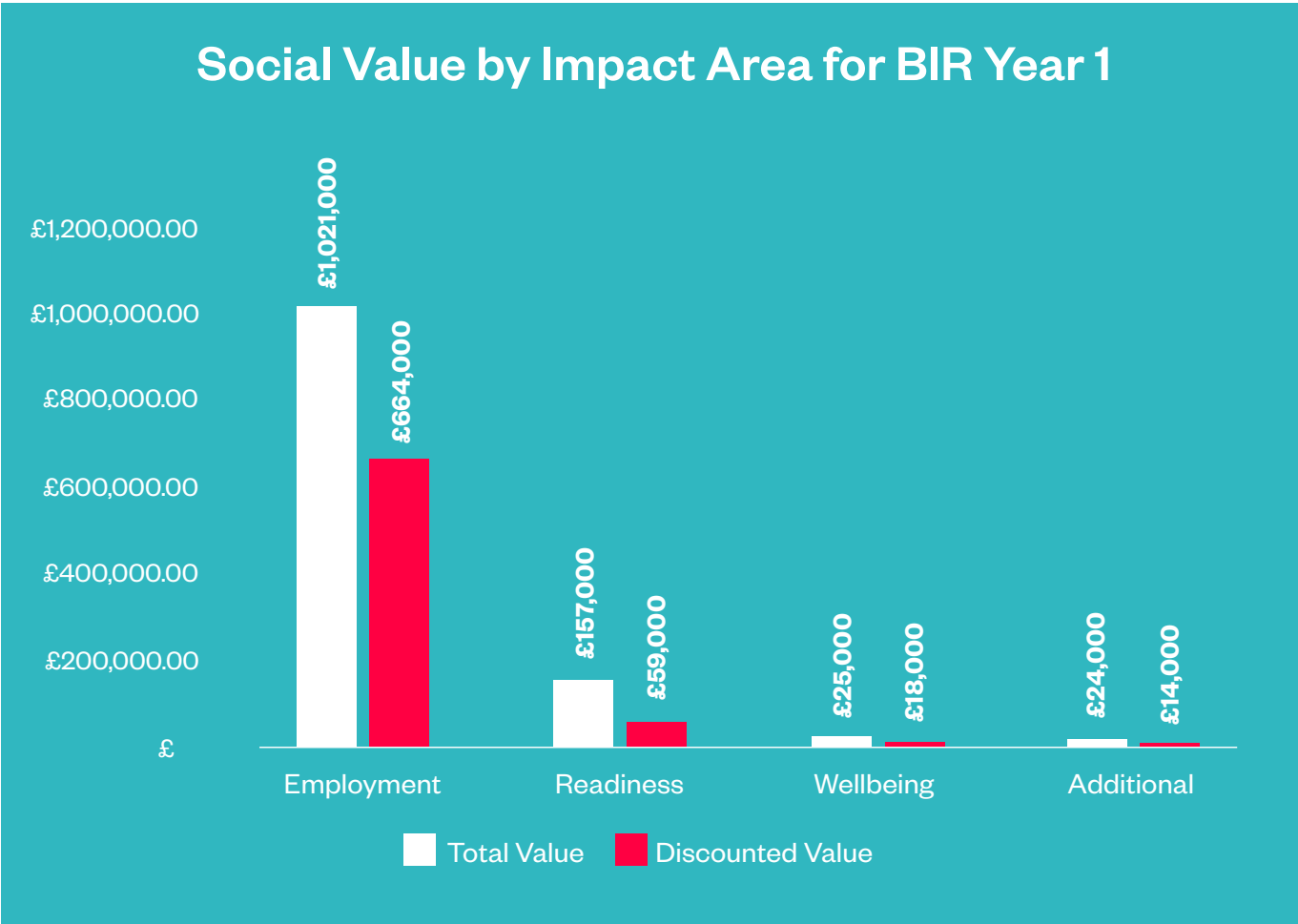
Also of significant value in the impact area of employment is supporting people leaving prison to not reoffend and return to prison. Preventing re-offending can bring a cost saving to the state of more than £37,000 and BIR is able to claim this social value by supporting ex-offenders into employment. In its first year, BIR supported four ex-offenders into work.

Accounting for all outcomes achieved and applying appropriate discounts, a social value of **£664,000** was achieved in the impact area of employment.

**Impact Area: Wellbeing**

Big Issue Recruit understands that when an individual is out of employment for an extended period it can have serious negative impacts on their mental wellbeing. BIR’s support is designed to help individuals take on a positive mindset which in turn can bring benefits to mental wellbeing, whether that individual is successful in achieving employment or not.

We track these changes through the Short Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Survey<sup>4</sup> (SWEMWBS) throughout a candidate’s engagement with our service. In line with the current available resource at



BIR, candidates complete the SWEMWBS during onboarding and then again after approximately six weeks of engagement with BIR.

At time of analysis<sup>7</sup>, 23 candidates had submitted both a baseline and endline response to SWEMWBS with an average uplift in score across the cohort of 1.13 points. 52% of respondents experienced a longitudinal improvement in their score, 35% of respondents experienced no change in their score and a final 13% experienced a longitudinal decline in their score. Across the entire cohort of respondents, a social value for the average change in wellbeing across the cohort of £1,210 was achieved. Applying this figure to each candidate who engaged with BIR in its first year and applying appropriate discounts, a total social value of more than

**£59,000** was achieved in the impact area of wellbeing<sup>8</sup>.

**Impact Area: Readiness**

To support individuals into employment, Big Issue Recruit needs to ensure those individuals have the skills and tools to first successfully secure employment and then to be successful in their new career. Two key areas of support offered by BIR Job Coaches to all candidates focus on appropriate pre-employment training tailored to each candidate’s personal needs and the development of a CV.

In BIR’s first year, 31 candidates completed pre-employment training courses and 83 candidates were supported to create and develop their CVs, amounting to an after discounts social value of **£18,700**.

Chart 1: Social Value by BIR Impact Area

**Impact Area: Additional Support**

As part of Big Issue Group, Big Issue Recruit can offer support to candidates in additional areas such as housing, health, and financial & digital inclusion by referring candidates into the Outreach team of the Big Issue Changing Lives C.I.C. With close support from Outreach Workers, BIR candidates can address the additional barriers that may be preventing them from moving into employment.

In the first year of BIR, one candidate was supported to secure permanent housing, two candidates were supported by Outreach workers to address their financial or digital exclusion and 14 candidates received additional ad-hoc support. This support, after discounts, created a social value of **£14,000**.





## Big Issue Recruit’s potential to grow its Social Value

As of July 2023, there were 520,000 individuals facing unemployment in the UK for periods exceeding 6 months; this represents 35% of all individuals facing unemployment. It is these individuals who are facing long term barriers to re-entering the workforce that Big Issue Recruit exists to support.

If those 520,000 individuals could all be supported into employment opportunities it could generate a potential, total social value of more than £12 billion for individuals, communities, and the UK economy.

That is the overwhelming scale of the current situation faced by individuals searching for work and by the UK economy. This also demonstrates the incredible opportunity that exists for BIR to scale and enable more individuals to access its tried and tested approach to supporting people back into employment.

To date, Big Issue Recruit has achieved its success in social impact and social value generation with just two Job Coaches supporting candidates. As BIR moves into its second year of operations it is our aim for each Job Coach to be supporting at least 75 candidates into employment, that means for each additional Job Coach employed by BIR an additional 75 individuals can be supported into sustainable employment generating an additional social value of approximately £1.4 million.



**520,000 people facing unemployment for 6 months or more**



**Potential social value generation of £12 billion**

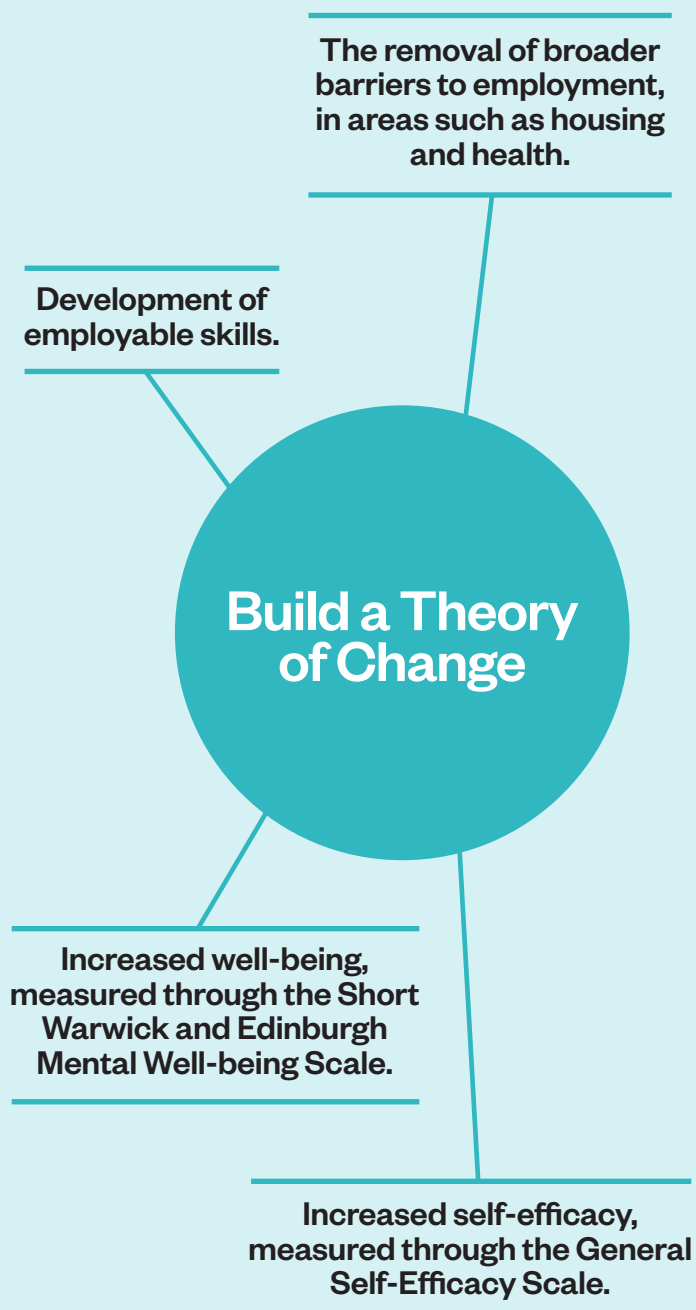


# Developing Big Issue Recruit's Impact Methodology

A key driver for the work of Big Issue Recruit, just like all of the work of Big Issue Group, is to build a world that works for everyone by unlocking social and economic opportunities through innovation. Big issue Recruit creates opportunities into employment, generating social and economic outcomes and delivering social impact. From the outset of planning Big Issue Recruit, dedicated resource has been committed from BIG's Impact Team to:

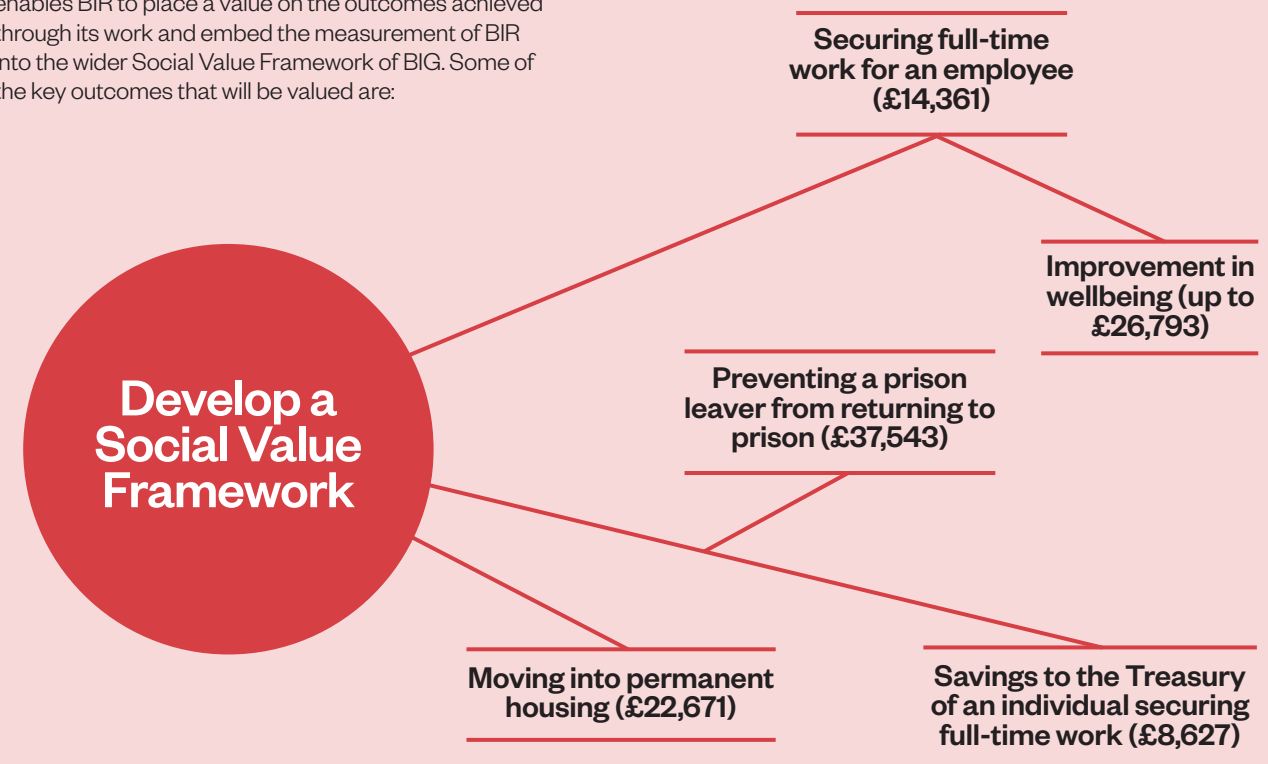
## Build a Theory of Change

and identify the sequence of events that BIR's actions set in motion from outputs through to short-, mid- and long-term outcomes and impacts. Big Issue Recruit's Theory of Change also identifies potential risks and negative impacts that may be created through the work of BIR and outlines mitigation approaches. Key outcomes are:



## Developing a social value framework

enables BIR to place a value on the outcomes achieved through its work and embed the measurement of BIR into the wider Social Value Framework of BIG. Some of the key outcomes that will be valued are:



## Support and advise on data collection

that ensures we have the necessary data to fully evidence the impact of Big Issue Recruit, as well as enable a constant practice of evaluation and improvement. Some of the work so far:

Building impact onboarding tools which gather the baseline data at the start of a candidate's journey with BIR, including wellbeing and self-efficacy.

Building impact endline tools to reassess the baseline metrics when a candidate moves out of BIR support.

Support and advise on data collection



## Candidate stories

Big Issue Recruit is always looking to tell the human stories behind its work and how it is truly helping to change peoples' lives. Here are just a few candidate stories.

### Mokhammed's Story

Mokhammed's first thought was his family when he heard explosions in his home city Kyiv, as Russia launched its attack on Ukraine. He feared for his young children and pregnant wife, and he knew they had to flee.

"It was scary," he remembers. "When I left my home, the tanks were shelling, and the earth was shaking. I left because I wanted to save my family and my children.

"They were small, and they were scared. They used to ask me: 'Daddy, will we come back?' They used to say: 'My toys are there.' We did not bring everything. We brought a few clothes but nothing else. All my children's toys were left there."

Mokhammed, 42, had been a salesman in a bazaar in Kyiv before the war broke out. But on 24 February 2022 everything changed, overnight.

With his family, he initially fled to Germany, where they applied online for the Ukraine Family Scheme visa in the UK. "We know a little bit of English," he says. "That's why we came here. It was my dream country when I was a child."

Mokhammed and his family were eventually moved to Hounslow, West London. More than a year

on, the family are still living in the same temporary accommodation. Desperate to find work, and on Universal Credit, he attended a job fair for Ukrainian refugees at Hounslow Job Centre where he met Shak Dean, Job Coach for Big Issue Recruit. "Mr Shak introduced himself a little bit and asked about me," Moradi says, "and he said: 'I will help you. Don't worry.' He gave me a chance to get employed more quickly."

Shak carried out an assessment with Mokhammed to learn more about him ahead of making job applications.

"He had the right attitude to go into work and to move forward," Shak said. "We work with lots of different people, but it's about having that drive and ambition to want to work. Mokhammed wanted to get a job. He wanted to look after his family.

"He just didn't understand the system here. He didn't understand how you make applications or things like the sign-up process. He'd never had to apply for a job for the last 17 years. He was totally out of the system. But he had this desire to work."

When Mokhammed was ready,



Shak shared his profile with the team at C&C, a leading drinks manufacturer and distributor, who then worked in partnership to ensure Mokhammed was set up for success ahead of the recruitment process.

Of his experience, Mokhammed said: "Shak helped me with my interview, with what to do and what to say. He told me to follow the history and know a little about the company, and he told me questions to prepare myself for before the interview."

Just over 12 months after leaving Kyiv and fleeing to the UK, Mokhammed has now embarked on a new career as a warehouse operative at C&C, in the London warehouse. He wants to train as

a forklift operator and, eventually, a truck driver.

After finding out he had got the job Mokhammed said: "I was very happy when I got the job. I said to Mr Shak: 'Thank you for your help. I'm very happy. You helped me and it worked.'"

Shak was thrilled too. "It was amazing," he says. "I've been buzzing about it since he got the job. It's a reminder for me about where I've come from as well. And it's so easy, like with Mokhammed's story, you're living your life, and something happens, and your life gets turned upside down. But it's about having someone who takes the time and the effort to guide you, rather than ticking boxes."



**Shak Dean**  
Job Coach for Big Issue Recruit

"He just didn't understand the system here. He didn't understand how you make applications or things like the sign-up process. He was totally out of the system."



### Sandrine's Story

Sandrine is a single mother who moved to the UK from Holland, but is originally from Congo. She had qualified and worked as a carer for many years and her last post was managing a care home.

She moved to the UK for her son's education. While living in London, she had her second child and had to look after both alone with no financial support from family, while living in temporary housing.

She had struggled to find work in London and could not find anything that would fit around her childcare responsibilities. But after working closely with her Big Issue Recruit Job Coach, Sandrine has now been placed into employment as a Catering Assistant.

She is happy in her new role and feels this will be a stepping stone to building a stable foundation for a life in the UK with her children.

When asked about her new job Sandrine said: "I feel excited to get up to come to work in the mornings, it has given me purpose and I feel so much better about myself. My team is so lovely! I appreciate the fact that I can now buy things for my sons."

Big Issue Recruit Job Coach Shak said: "Sandrine has a great attitude and a genuine drive to improve her situation. Her manager has fed back that he and the team are extremely happy with her progress. He has high hopes for her to be a solid member of the team and progress onto other roles".



# Partnerships

BIR aims to build ongoing partnerships with employers so that we can get to know the business and offer a swift, tailored service for our clients. BIR works closely with partner employers to support candidates through the employment process to best guarantee successful job matching, improving outcomes for candidates and reducing churn.

## C&C Group

C&C Group plc is a premium drinks company which owns, manufactures, markets and distributes a unique portfolio of brands in its home markets and across the globe.

BIR has worked closely with C&C Group to source candidates for Warehousing roles in London, Glasgow and Wetherby.

Building on C&C's legacy of existing outreach initiatives which have empowered people from marginalised communities into work, and as part of its established Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Agenda, the employment pathway is also set to extend across C&C's wide network of customers, partners and suppliers within the UK hospitality industry. This will allow even more people to benefit from employment opportunities together with crucial pre, during and post-employment support within the industry that is the UK's fourth-largest employer, at a time when access to talent remains a key issue.



### Doug Haggart

C&C's HR Lead for Customer Service and Logistics

"It's been really exciting to be involved with Big Issue Recruit, and to identify how to bring their candidates into C&C. The colleagues who've joined us all interviewed strongly, had really researched us, and have settled in well. It's one of the things we've done that makes me smile, giving people a well-earned start or step up the career ladder."

TIER

## Tier

Tier is a micro-mobility company operating fleets of e-scooters and bicycles in several cities across the UK, including London, York, and Colchester. Tier have just been awarded a contract to provide micro-mobility solutions to the West of England Combined Authority and BIR will act as an operations partner on the contract, carrying out a range of logistical tasks through a dedicated local team.

Tier have outsourced their rebalancing and maintenance to BIR who has employed a team of 10 rangers and drivers to work across their Bristol operations.

### Jessica Murphy

Tier's Head of Public Policy

"Big Issue Recruit, and the Big Issue Group, have a long history of making positive change in the West of England and we are extremely pleased to be working with the team as we launch our shared micro-mobility service in Bristol and Bath. It is important to us that our service benefits as many people's lives as possible, and working with BIR means our operations team will have unparalleled local knowledge from the start."







To find out more about the Big Issue Recruit programme and how we can work with you to support your employment needs contact  
[Katy.Wright@bigissue.com](mailto:Katy.Wright@bigissue.com)

#### **Fund Information**

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