

she has issues

All vendors selling **The Big Issue in the North** must abide by the Code of Conduct, the set of rules governing how they work. Outreach teams from The Big Issue in the North patrol the streets daily to check vendors' behaviour and to encourage and support them while working. Here are some of the key rules:

1. Vendors can only sell on designated pitches organised by The Big Issue in the North.
2. Vendors cannot sell between 8.00pm and 7.00am (6.00pm in Liverpool city centre). Police officers have the authority to confiscate magazines and badges if they witness vendors selling during these hours.
3. Vendors must always wear their own badge when buying or selling the magazine and only sell magazines with their number on.
4. Vendors can only buy magazines for themselves.
5. Vendors must not use physical or verbal aggression towards the public or other vendors.
6. Vendors are not allowed to sell if staff feel they are unfit to do so.
7. Vendors must stand when selling; sitting down is an obstruction to the public highway and is illegal.
8. Vendors must not beg for money using the magazine. Asking for spare change or other items is considered to be begging.
9. Vendors can only charge £2.00 for each magazine and must always give the customer the magazine once paid for. Failing to do so is fraudulent and may result in police involvement.

To comment on vendor behaviour, please call:
Manchester: 0161 831 5570
Liverpool: 0151 702 6931
Leeds: 0113 243 9027

The Big Issue in the North Trust raises funds to provide services for homeless vendors of this magazine.



Volunteer and recruitment, page 35

Emma Unsworth calls last orders on binge drinking scare stories

Gender equality issues have been making headlines lately in the shape of SlutWalks – the most recent one being in Manchester on 10 June – and Times columnist Caitlin Moran's brilliant new book, *How To Be A Woman. If, like me, you're lucky enough to mainly socialise with men who identify themselves as feminists, sometimes it's easy to forget that there is still much work to be done in the fight for equality. But is there ever.*

Last week's news coverage of the Take That gigs at the City of Manchester Stadium made my blood boil. I was reminded of the articles and TV shows from a few years ago identifying "binge drinking" as one of the biggest problems created by young women in Britain. Never mind that exactly what constitutes binge drinking is fuzzy and at best unrealistic. Never mind that plenty of young men go out drinking after work and at the weekend – and have done for centuries. It doesn't matter that more and more women are pursuing careers instead of having children (hey, some even manage to do both) and therefore have a personal disposable income for leisure. Nor does it seem to matter that the vast majority of these women don't drink to excess in a way that makes them dangerous to themselves and others. Because the subtext of the rusty old binge drinking hook was this: women, especially young women, simply shouldn't drink.

Almost half a million fans attended the eight home gigs Take That played to kick off Progress Live, their biggest UK tour to date. And yet

somehow the papers were full of horror stories of hordes of "boozed-up" female fans because – and the figures here are pretty staggering – Manchester Royal Infirmary admitted just 87 more people than last year with drink-related injuries for just six of those eight gigs. Out of half a million, 160 people in total were admitted to A&E and treated for alcohol poisoning and sprains, but even the BBC couldn't resist getting in on the hyperbole, describing MRI as being "flooded" with drunken women.

I'd like to see the stats for a football match because I'm sure MRI A&E sees a spike in admittances during each and every one of those too. Not that women don't attend football and men don't attend Take That concerts, but in terms of the gender demographics of both, it's clear to me there's demonisation afoot. The media also swooped on the 65 women who were thrown out of the eight gigs for being too drunk, largely ignoring the fact that 35 men who were also ejected for the same reason. Thinking of the demographic of those gigs again, that's an interesting ratio, isn't it? But no – drunken women were the scandal of Eastlands.

There was also a real cruelty in many of the reports – and online comments – slamming "middle-aged" women for trying to "relive their youth". Stewards were quoted as saying that women arrived early to get a position near the stage and drank for hours – fuelling the notion that female fans are all hysterical idiots. I mean, how ridiculous! The fools! And how inconsiderate! Really they should all have been at home watching

The subtext was this: women, especially young women, simply shouldn't drink

Outnumbered or dipping their nets.

I'm not saying alcohol doesn't cause problems when consumed in excess at public events (and private ones, for that matter). I also think that if under-18s are permitted into a gig, alcohol shouldn't be on sale at all. And I don't doubt there were more people admitted to A&E the nights of the Take That gigs – but I bet there's a spike whenever there's a concert on in town. I'd like to see the figures from Oasis concerts too. And Status Quo. And Peter Kay. And don't even get me started on those kids bouncing off the walls high on sugar when The Wiggles crew comes to town. ■

Emma Unsworth is a Manchester-based writer. Her first novel, *Hungry, The Stars And Everything*, is published by Hidden Gem Press. She blogs at emmajaneunsworth.wordpress.com.

