 **Newsletter 4th May 2020**

6 weeks in, it seems timely to circulate thanks and a message to all of the **129 volunteers** we have registered with Bradninch Together.

129 is a large number. It’s a full upstairs at The Guildhall, and it feels odd that we have never been together as a group. But although we have never met, I have taken great enjoyment from working closely with people I didn’t know 6 weeks ago. The sense of trust and common purpose here in the Town is tremendous.

To celebrate some facts:

We have **7 active colour zone groups** in the town and between us we have undertaken **299 individual acts of kindness** for our neighbours. On the separate sheet this is broken down so you can see where we are experiencing the most demand. Our co-ordinators have done a constant and wonderfully efficient job of managing requests so here’s a shout out with big thanks to Cariad and Viv in Purple, Dorothy John and Gwyneth in Blue, Neala and Andy in Orange, Anthea in Green, Carolyn in Brown and Elise in Yellow, together with Suzanne and David in White.

Each group has a team of **volunteers,** many of whom who have done door-door leaflet drops three times now as well as carrying out the 299 acts. We are very aware that our supply of volunteers has been greater than the requests for help we’ve had. We believe that this is a good thing: it means that things have not got as bad as we imagined they could. And we’ve been sharing the load, although all this probably means that a number of you haven’t had an opportunity to do anything yet. For those of you who have been racing to reply to the Whatsapp request, please know that there are others who can take up the strain, and for anyone really keen to do something, please let your co-ordinator know.

We have created a **website,** co-ordinated by Kate and artfully laid out by Eleanor and Corin: thanks for your swiftness and occasional sweat. We believe it to be a mix of practical information and inspiration with a particularly local focus. This is where to go if you want to know more about what is going on and who to contact. Kate will be glad to hear from you if you feel something else could be included. [www.bradninchtogether.org.uk](http://www.bradninchtogether.org.uk) has all the contact details.

Thanks to the generosity of local people and organisations, the Steering Group has been able to set up a hardship fund, **BradAid,** to help people who find themselves in unusual need of help. Bradninch Arts Group have kindly agreed to their bank account being used, on a temporary basis, to process funds, and at the time of writing we have recieved 9 donations to the fund, some anonymous, and made 7 grants. A panel of volunteers drawn from the co-ordinator group is helping to process requests. More information on how to give and receive is on the website.

Looking ahead there are a few things to flag up. It looks like we are about to enter a period of uncertainty and possibly greater worry as lockdown is eased. Some of us will be going to work, which may change our availability, and there are fears of a second wave of infection. We believe that there is every reason to continue offering our services for many weeks to come.

We are also aware that we need to be more properly organised, and accountable. We recognise that handling money brings with it responsibilities and the Steering Group intend to create and register a simple charitable structure so that funds and other things that Bradninch might want to do together can be properly and transparently managed. We will be setting up a charity with open membership, so that any decision makers can be elected to be in place courtesy of the trust of all the members. More about this in due course, and I hope you will feel able to join as members and be part of a positive legacy.

Another aspect of proper organisation is being responsible with the personal data that we hold. When we set up, our urgency was to make something work at speed. Now that it is working, we see the need to have some agreed ways of managing your data and privacy and giving you options, as well as managing information we hold about other people. We would welcome input from anybody who has experience in GDPR compliance, and would be willing to lend it to Bradninch Together. Could anyone come forward and offer to work with us please? Do send a note to steering.group@bradninchtogether.org.uk if you’d like to talk this over.

One reminder please, is that we have a White group of volunteers who are very happy to give people a phonecall, a “Check and Chat” to be sure they are OK. If you think someone might benefit from this please tell them to contact their co-ordinator as they would for other assistance, and the process will swing into action. You can also mention a possible need to your co-ordinator.

Thanks are due to my fellow steering group members, Sue, Sophie, Luke and Olly. They’ve put in a great deal of time and effort. We’ve also had great practical support from The Town Council, St Disen’s Church, from Piers who has wrangled software and Google sheets, from Dave and Kathy, rekindling their youth scootering a paper round, and from Owen who created the Logo.

Keep well,

Anthony

Finally, in the words of someone who has been helped by BradAid:

*Thank you very much: [the grant] will be a massive help in the current situation. I’d also just like to say a massive “thank you” for the support that Bradninch Together is offering everyone. It really is so lovely seeing everyone come together, and we are definitely very lucky to live alongside such an amazing community.*