



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

COMMUNITY

Burntwood Town Council

Burntwood be a Friend

Burntwood Be A Friend (BBAF) was set up immediately before lockdown in March 2020. Working in collaboration with St Anne's and St John's Churches, Spark (Burntwood) CIC – a parent-led organisation which runs the local children's centre - local businesses and the Foodbank, the Town Council initially acted as an umbrella organisation to bring numerous partners together. The partnership wanted to ensure that all residents could easily access support, especially families under financial stress and the relatively high number of older adults living alone.

When lockdown was announced Be a Friend immediately set up a telephone helpline, email address and Facebook page, reaching over 13,000 users in Burntwood out of a town of 28,000, by the end of March, with over 130 volunteers. The Council provided an emergency set-up grant of £1,000 and applied for external grant assistance on BBAF's behalf. Volunteers DBS-checked and trained in Safeguarding, facilitated by Spark, and the Council Leader took part in and fed back from district-wide collaboration teleconferences, enabling BBAF to be linked into district and county-wide emerging issues and opportunities.

The cooperation and collaboration has been exemplary and BBAF has now become the town's "go-to" organisation for anyone needing help and advice. By working closely with the Trussell Trust, Citizens' Advice Bureau, local schools, MHA Communities, and other local groups, BBAF has been able to meet needs not met by other providers – a true, strong, collaborative and co-operative partnership.

BBAF has been hugely successful, and all partners want to build on this, promoting greater self-reliance in order to prevent social isolation and increase independence. As well as continuing to BBAF support for anyone in need, the group continues to work with the local Foodbank, FareShare and local supermarkets, is about to set up a Community Shop and has initiated community gardening schemes. It has developed a wide network of support organisations to refer residents to – including local councillors.



For further information contact:

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