



Brickworks Newsletter

December 2020
Number 8



Getting ready: Colin Adams and Caroline Healey

Christmas is normally a time for celebration. But this year it will be different. 2020 has been a tough time for all of us; for some of us, faced by a death, sickness or depression in the family, there has been little to celebrate.

At Brickworks, we've felt the strain, with several staff members suffering from corona virus (and mercifully recovering) while the numbers of people needing help has risen by the day.

Thanks to our amazing staff, we've kept open throughout the year. We've had to suspend some services – such as the lunch clubs but other groups, such as Special People, Centre 404, Blythwood Nursery and After School Club are still doing a great job; as is the food bank. A big thank- you to Tesco, the Co-op, Marks & Spencer, Edible London and Waitrose for their donations and to Dan Carrier, Mutual Aid and Yes Outdoors for helping with delivery.

Volunteers have come to the fore this year and their work has been invaluable. The residents of Lothair Road and Trinder Road have donated food parcels. Others have offered us support and encouragement, drawing our attention to people who needed special help. Thanks to you all and apologies to anyone we might have missed.

Finally, a happy Christmas from all of us at Brickworks.

Colin Adams
Director

IN CONCERT

On December 17, Brickworks will be hosting Las Negrillas, an evening of 17th-century Christmas music from South America. The organisers are keen for us to join in with percussion or handclaps – and will be setting up an online workshop.

Tickets, available on Eventbrite, cost £5 for the socially distanced live show (online screening is free but donations are welcome). For further information go to bit.ly/LasNegrillas.

UP AND COMING

Watch out for some exciting new year initiatives at Brickworks. In January we are setting up a debt counselling service, offering advice on an increasingly common problem. Check our website for details.

Brickworks needs volunteers. Please get in touch if you'd like to help with any of our community projects – or have ideas for new ones.



LAPTOPS WANTED

YES Outdoors, a mentoring group for young people, is one of the many self-help organisations that have changed the way they work during the pandemic.

Beforehand, they'd been teaching skills such as bike-maintenance. In March, they went on-line – offering help and support through Zoom classes – and organising a campaign to get hold of unwanted laptops for young people they were working with.

So far, 400 laptops have been donated, along with a total of £10,000 in donations. At the weekly Zoom sessions, run by a qualified teacher and psychologist and a youth worker, 10-15 young people get the chance to talk openly about their lives and the problems they face.

'This is a worrying time,' says Tony Quinn, of Yes Outdoors. 'The kids are filled with uncertainty about the future, their home life, and employment prospects. There's a lot of frustration...'

Brickworks is supporting the appeal for used laptops, and finding new owners for them; and YES Outdoors has been helping by picking up food from the Co-op for the Brickworks foodbank.

If you'd like to donate laptops or other IT equipment, please get in touch via Brickworks.

■ Young people have also been talking about life during the pandemic at the Islington Youth Debate, which was held online on November 11. The speakers, from different faiths, culture and backgrounds, talked openly about their circumstances and worries, mental health among them. The event, organised by the Young Creators and other members of the Copenhagen Youth Project, was streamed on Youtube.

EVERYBODY NEEDS NEIGHBOURS

Our Mutual Aid group has been active throughout the pandemic

Just before the first lockdown – it seems a long time ago now - flyers started appearing around Stroud Green with the words 'Mutual Aid' printed on them. This was the start of a new organisation, set up to help people stuck at home during the pandemic.

Melissa 'Missy' O'Carroll, a founder member, had campaigned on behalf of the Women's Equality Party during London's recent mayoral elections. 'When the pandemic reached Italy, a colleague said we needed to get active locally,' she says, 'so we set up or joined local groups, in each ward.'

The Tollington and Hillrise Group was born on March 14. It offered a range of services – from doing the shopping and picking up prescriptions to chatting over the phone and even walking the dog.

'We did the whole neighbourhood,' says Melissa. At the time, the group had 12 co-ordinators, responsible for publicity, organising rotas, handling requests from local residents and putting them in touch with volunteers.

Brickworks helped out by printing the flyers – and also puts together food parcels, which Mutual Aid delivers.

The results of the campaign were startling. Since March, the group has received around 400 requests for help and put together a taskforce of 500 volunteers. In the process, new relationships have been forged, as volunteers and local residents got to know each other.



'We did some follow-up work,' says Melissa, 'and found that over 30 per cent of the people we'd linked up, stayed in touch.' This highlights a major problem faced by older people during the pandemic: loneliness and isolation, coupled with a fear of going out and a lack of confidence.

The group has also been working with young people, taking them on to create a website and organise campaigns on social media.

Some residents have been suffering with mental health problems: Mutual Aid has been sharing information with the council and referring people to the relevant services.

The group still reaches only a certain proportion of the community: it's virtually impossible to reach those who don't have access to a computer. But for other people, it has provided a valuable link to the outside world.

One man in his 80s was put in touch with a volunteer 60 years his junior. They now text each other every day, to say hello. Another elderly man, who came from Ireland 40 years ago, texted to say that he needed only two things: bread and a box of tea.

Melissa herself belongs to an informal group of volunteers who walk a local dog, Lala; other volunteers sort out of the owner's garden and do the shopping.

No matter how soon the pandemic ends, she feels that Mutual Aid is here to stay. The results speak for themselves. One volunteer, who was put in touch with a resident down the road, said: 'I can't believe it. We've lived on the same road for 35 years and, until now, our paths never crossed.'

Contact Mutual Aid on 0749497 1873

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MutualAidTH>

RESIDENTS SPEAK OUT

A survey of Islington residents reveals some stark truths about local responses to the pandemic. The biggest worry is not the virus itself but its effects on our mental health.

The survey, released in October, was commissioned by the local council and voluntary groups; 550 Islington residents took part, along with a smaller focus group, including Camden residents.

Respondents were asked about their chief worries during the pandemic. Top of the list (at 47 per cent) came mental health, followed by physical health (43 per cent), with fear of catching the virus at 42 per cent.

Finance was a big issue for BAME residents. Asian and Black respondents ranked household or personal finances among their main concerns (60 per cent and 40 per cent respectively) compared with 20 per cent for their white counterparts.

Social isolation is also a huge worry, over a quarter of respondents feeling that their social connection and mental health will deteriorate over the next 12 months.

More encouragingly, 52 per cent of those questioned thought that, since the pandemic, people have been doing more to help others in the community.

If you know of anyone living along and needing human contact, please let us know at Brickworks.

2020: HOW WAS IT FOR YOU?

JEAN, 51, Brickworks chef

It's not been a good year. Mum's been in hospital, with bowel problems, for three months, so I've been visiting her. Christmas won't be the same...

RICHARD, 33, manager of the After School Club

I was hit with coronavirus in late February. It was very challenging – having to keep away from my loved ones. My Mum and Dad are vulnerable, so I've not seen them or any friends, for weeks. Christmas is cancelled...

GLODY, 26, play worker at the After School Club

It hasn't been the best year (laughs). I was affected by covid for about a month. It was quite terrible, weird - I had a temperature of 40. I live with my Mum and Dad. They're both vulnerable. They had to isolate; then Mum got it. It was scary.

HARRY, 15, student

It's been hard. I had five or six months off. The worst thing was not seeing my friends. The best: having more time in the day – to go on the phone or play games. I had a lot of school work. We were given worksheets. I'd log on at 9am and finish at 4.

We had to take a picture of our work and submit it. It's been good to get back to proper teaching.

HUSEYIN, 23, support worker for Group 404

2020? 'Interesting' would be the best way to put it. Stagnant. A funny one.

Life has stopped, outside work. I haven't thought about Christmas...

SONIA, 62, nursery practitioner

The children are the ones I feel sorry for, being stuck indoors. I'm not sure about Christmas – taking it one day at a time. It'll feel strange when we do get back to normal...

MARCIA, nursery manager

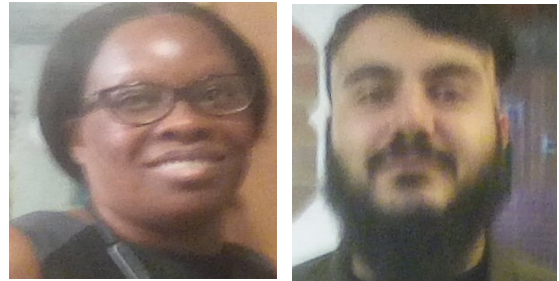
It's been very challenging, we managed to cope by staying strong and realising that there were other people who were worse off. I feel passionately for the families who were having mental health problems at the time.

LOUISE, 48, copywriter

2020 gave me time to be introspective. I went back to study – strengthening my skills in IT. Over Christmas I'll be spending time with my family; it's important we keep our peckers up for 2021. Let's hope the job situation improves: there are jobs out there – it's knowing who to approach.

MJ, 51, support worker

It's been very stressful. My mother's 80 and it's been so hard for her to get her head around this. When I see her she wants to hug me, and there I am with my mask, keeping my distance... I've never cried so much in one year. It's good that we're in a place where everyone's friendly. Good relationships help. It's all about people.....



Looking back: Marcia and Huseyin





MY BRICKWORKS



Special People provides support, at home and in the community, for children and adults with complex medical and special educational needs.

I'm responsible for 200 people, so I'm always busy. I really value the people we work for, and also the kind of work we do, which is so important, and the things we stand for.

I've been working for Special people for 6 years, but have always worked in the care sector carer – I was also caring for my parents at a very young age.

As a country we're not aware of the work that young carers do; a lot of it is unseen, people doing it out of the kindness of their hearts, not knowing who to ask or just wanting to keep the person safe.

One of our main difficulties is that a lot of carers are isolating, because their children have had to isolate. "We need someone to look after the kids" which is a problem. So far, we've managed to get the staff or have staff covered and I want them to know that we are so grateful for all the hard work they have put in

One of the things that kept me going was doing PPE runs to clients with much needed equipment for our workers to support.

Being recognised is great. When we were clapping for carers, my neighbours came out and clapped towards me. At the beginning, I thought 'This isn't right; I'm not on the front line'. But then I thought it was such a nice thing to happen. Embarrassing but nice!

would like to say a big thank you to the staff at Brickworks who worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic and keeping the building open not just for those who work in the building but for local residents too

I'm optimistic. We'll get back to normal in time. As long as we can carry on

HELP WHEN IT'S NEEDED

Here are some useful contacts if you need help or advice:

Age UK Islington: Coronavirus Update Age UK Islington is running a helpline, Mon to Fri 9am - 5pm, 020 7281 6018.

Barnados: A dedicated helpline and webchat support service for Children and their families from Black and Asian backgrounds (BOLOH): 0800 1512605, www.helpline.barnados.org.uk

Camden, City, Islington & Westminster Bereavement Service: Coronavirus Update: Camden City Islington Westminster Bereavement Service provide bereavement and loss counselling delivered by counsellors and therapists. Call them on 020 7284 0090

Citizens Advice Islington: Coronavirus Update Citizens Advice Islington is currently providing legal advice from Monday – Friday, 10am to 4pm. Advice line, 0300 330 1197

Healthwatch Islington: Coronavirus Update Healthwatch Islington is currently running a signposting service, answering people's questions about local health care services. 0207 832 5814.

Help On Your Doorstep: offers telephone support/ advice and signposting (Connect Service), Monday – Friday 10am-4pm: connect@helponyourdoorstep.com or 020 3931 6080.

Home-Start Camden and Islington: provides phone-based parenting support and guidance for families with children under the age of five who are experiencing difficulties or are vulnerable. 020 7424 1603.

Kooth: An online counselling and emotional well-being platform for children and young people, <https://www.kooth.com/>

Solace: free and confidential support for women and men in Islington affected by domestic abuse. Call 020 3795 5070 or email advocacy@solacewomensaid.org

We Are Islington: for help with shopping and collecting medicine, contact us on 020 7527 8222.

For further information on local services, go to the Islington Council website: <https://www.islington.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/coronavirus-covid-19/need-help>


Christmas stocking appeal

Brickworks is putting together Christmas stockings for our elderly residents and families who are struggling and are on the members' list. We would really appreciate any donations of mince pies, stollen, chocolates, Christmas pudding and other seasonal treats. Donations can be delivered to Brickworks Community Centre, 42 Crouch Hill N4 4BY and you can contact us on 02072631067/admin@hanleycrouch.org.uk. We are open 8am–6pm, Monday to Friday .

For regular updates on all of our services, go to www.hanleycrouch.org.uk

The next Brickworks newsletter will appear in March 2021. If you have any ideas, comments or suggestions, please send them to chrisxhowe@gmail.com





**Brickworks
Closing dates
over Christmas:**

We are opened **Thursday 24th December 2020 from 9am to 3pm.**

We will be closed from **Christmas Day 25th December 2020**

We will reopen again on **Tuesday 29th December 2020 – Thursday 31st December 2020 from 9am to 5pm.**

Closed: **1st January 2021**

The centre will then reopen on **Monday 4th January 2021.**

Food Bank:

The last day of the food bank will be **Monday 21st December 2020 from 12pm – 5pm.**

Will open one day again on **Tuesday 29th December 2020 from 12pm – 5pm.**

Fully resume on **Monday 4th January 2021.**

If you would like to know any more information about what we do you can call us on **02072631067** or check our website out **www.hanleycrouch.org.uk**

Rooftop Kitchen Garden & Living Learning Greenspaces

Brickworks Community Centre is a member of the Octopus Community Network and are involved in running Rooftop Kitchen Garden & Living Learning Greenspaces project with Octopus as a key part of developing the Network's 'Community Food Hub' programme;.

We will be growing and distributing fresh food for those in need and teaching healthy eating habits, with the Octopus Community Plant Nursery being the 'feeder' for distribution of seeds, seedlings and plants and the 'hub for learning'; teaching food growing and greening skills,



If you are interested in getting involved with this project contact Franie on 07410 948 885 for more information.

Brickworks Community Centre

Regular activities:

Children Services:

After School Club & Holiday Play Scheme 3pm– 6pm

Food Bank:

Monday—Thursday 12pm—3pm. We do deliveries and collection. For more information contact us on **0207 263 1067.**

We also provide internet access, clear recycling bags and food waste bags can be collected from the centre.

Other services:

Blythwood Community Nursery: Mondays to Fridays, 8am-6pm. Day-care for children aged 18 months to four years. **020 7263 5070; info@blythwoodcommunitynursery.co.uk**

Special People: working with adults and children with special needs. **020 7686 0253; www.specialpeople.org.uk**

Centre 404: Drop in day service for adults with special needs. If you would like to know more about this service contact them on: **020 7607 8762 .**

