



Hello everyone,

Over the last couple of years the project has become well known throughout Suffolk, and we have tried to make a few contacts at national level who might promote our views and ideas about ensuring no one, no matter how frail they become, should have to leave their own community to receive the care they need. I admit it feels like a massive challenge when all the trends are towards centralisation of health, residential and nursing care into large units located in and around the major towns. It seems there is no longer any place for the smaller facilities which are appropriate to rural communities such as ours. And yet we know that when it comes to quality of care and quality of life there is no substitute for being cared for within your own community by your family, neighbours, and the professionals you know.

So you can imagine my delight when, completely “out of the blue”, we received an e-mail on behalf of **The Joseph Rowntree Foundation** - one of the major national players, alongside The Wellcome Trust, in seeking better health and social care, and in funding innovative approaches - asking if **The Debenham Project** might be used as a case study for how communities can take the lead in supporting the elderly frail, and especially those with dementia. We knew that the project was unique in Suffolk but it seems that there are no similar projects across the UK! The Foundation wants to study the “Debenham” approach as an example for other UK rural communities to follow. It is not only an opportunity to gain some “street cred” with the academics and professionals, but also to “advertise” our approach at a National level. With a bit of luck that will reflect back to our local authorities and NHS to better guarantee their support, funding, etc. The recommendations of The Rowntree Foundation can directly influence government health and social care policy. Our trustees have agreed that we should make the most of this opportunity and we will host a 2 day visit later on this month.

Moving on, there are just a couple of other items to tell you about. Firstly, one of the recent successes is **Fit Club** - a group of us slightly older people who could benefit from some ‘gentler’ chair based exercise to improve our posture, flexibility, mobility, balance, coordination, etc. It has proved to be great fun and very beneficial. Sorry, but we have a full membership at the moment but if you would like to join please let me know and we will put you on the waiting list – if there is enough positive commitment we will try to start another group.

Secondly, for all those incredible people who have directly helped with the project please put the following date in your diary: June 23rd. Mike and Lyn Rouse have again generously offered to host our annual garden party for all those volunteers, carers, cared-for and professional supporters who have freely given their time over the last year. Invitations will be going out shortly.

If you would like to know more about The Debenham Project, please think about visiting our website www.the-debenham-project.org.uk where you can access all our newsletters, and much more. If you are a bit unsure how to contact us on the web please call in at **The Library Resource Centre**, Cross Green, Debenham and ask Melanie or one of her staff to help you. A range of leaflets are available at the **Post Office** and don't hesitate to call the **Project Phone Line** 01728 862003.

With my best wishes,

Lynden