



Hello everyone,

Sometimes an idea can take a long time to take root and grow even though everyone seems to think it makes good sense. This has been the case with developing community-based dementia support in Suffolk. Although there have been a number of excellent examples of local voluntary and third sector projects including synergy cafes, activity groups, and of course our own Debenham Project, investment and commitment by the statutory authorities (Suffolk County Council and NHS Suffolk) has been very limited. It is true that money has been spent in increasing the county's level of diagnosis, in improving dementia care in our hospitals, and in crisis intervention, but very little in supporting family carers and those with the illness to cope with the stress, exhaustion, anxiety, isolation, questions, and the myriad of other difficulties. However, I am delighted to report that things are changing and the NHS and local authorities will be jointly funding a new service which they call peri-diagnosis dementia support which aims in the future to deliver continuing support to families following (and in some cases before) a diagnosis, in terms of information and advice, peer support, activities, social interaction, therapy, advocacy, etc. all within their local community. It is not a huge amount of money to start with (£550,000 over two years) and it will depend upon encouraging and supporting largely voluntary organisations and communities throughout Suffolk to "do something to make a difference". However, with examples such as Debenham, Hadleigh, Halesworth, Wickham Market, Sudbury, and others I know we can do it. It is just the start.

And "making a difference" comes in all shapes and sizes. One idea that caught my imagination recently was the "dementia-friendly" showings of films at Stowmarket's Regal Cinema. So often, going to the cinema is out of the question for someone with dementia, but by keeping the lights up, restricting the size of the audience so there is lots of space, making the sound level suitable, having extra staff with dementia awareness training, having somewhere to chill out if necessary, etc it doesn't have to be so. It just a matter of caring. It may be that we could do something here in Debenham - pop-up cinemas are being explored for two or three Mid Suffolk communities. However, it all depends upon the numbers.

This month, I especially want to thank Angeline Dunnnett for her exceptionally generous donation of £1,500 made in further recognition of her late husband Ken. Ken was a great advocate for "getting on and doing" and Angeline knows that this money in his memory will help us do the same.

Finally, do remember that we have a couple of wheelchairs. If you would like to take someone with mobility problems out for a stroll, or if you need one to take them to an appointment, please just ask.

Best wishes, Lynden

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