



Newsletter – July 30th 2010

Hello everyone, another month and the project continues to thrive. It is now becoming well known throughout Suffolk (and beyond) and is increasingly being asked to give talks and presentations to professional groups and meetings. In addition we have been included in **The Suffolk Ideas Cookbook** – a collection of the most significant collaborative projects in the county – www.suffolkideascookbook.org.uk. Several of us have been involved in making a short “training” video for the County Council describing the project. I was also asked to contribute to the debate on Radio Suffolk about the impact of the difficult financial decisions that are facing the County Council and how projects such as ours can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of support services. Right at the end of the month Paddy Fielder, Melanie Wood and myself did a piece for Look East which seems to have gone down very positively – many thanks to everyone who “stood by” but were not used on this occasion. Although this sort of activity takes time and effort, it is very important as it not only helps us with our funding, but also encourages other communities to follow our lead.

However, the trustees and I place what we are doing directly for carers, and those they care for, as our highest priority. They are “What it is all about”.

Our first **Awareness Campaign** has now finished. As described in our last newsletter, it started with our volunteers using the “personal touch”. Then, leaflets were distributed through the Surgery and the Pharmacy, the Post Office and the Library, and posters began appearing in various key locations. The parish councils in our area have also started to help – the district and county councils generously offered to distribute our material. Our local newsagents have kindly delivered them with the newspapers and volunteers have dropped them through letterboxes. We have already had 15 carers contacting us to ask for information and quite a few are getting involved in our activities. We have also been able to recruit some new volunteers. Other approaches linked to The NHS and to Adult Care are being considered.

The Debenham Project is not about “numbers” but about how much of a difference a “bit of the right sort of help” can make to the life of someone who cares for a loved one with dementia, and that of the person they care for. We know that we are succeeding. However, in a time of targets and statistics (hopefully that is changing to towards “what we can do” and “how we are getting on”) we do need to be able to show that what we are doing is valuable and worth the effort and resources that we, and all our partners, are putting in. So here goes.

We now have, at the last count, 34 carers and 31 cared-for on our books and we are becoming aware of more as time goes by. We have also helped several "remote" carers who have relatives with dementia outside our catchment area. About 2/3 are actively involved in one or more of our activities. About 12 are, for the moment, happy to be supported with information only. Overall, we are probably giving some level of support to about 30% of the estimated total numbers of carers and cared for. This is actually a very good proportion compared with the "national average", but it shows that we still have a lot to do.

So if you know of someone who might benefit from our support please gently encourage them to "make contact". This is not about them actively seeking support but to let them know help is available when they need it and, hopefully, to avoid a crisis.

As with all community projects we must always put in a lot of hard work to obtain the **money** necessary to run and develop the services. However, everyone has been so supportive and several more private individuals have come forward to offer their financial help. I can't thank them enough – in difficult times to say "I want to help" is precious – thank you.

Last year the Project was in its infancy and who could have foretold how it would have grown. It seems incredible that something that started from such small beginnings could now be recognized across the county of Suffolk as an important contribution to tackling the massive problems that face carers for those with dementia, and those that they care for – we have been blessed by tremendous goodwill in the local authorities, NHS and the charities.

Look out for our autumn training and education programme which will start on 8th September.

As always, thanks to all in Debenham, the surrounding villages, the local authorities, and our partners for all their support.

If you would like to know more please see our display in the Post Office, ring 01728862003, call in at the Library Resource Centre, or visit www.the-debenham-project.org.uk where you can access all our newsletters, and much more.

With best wishes and kind regards

Lynden