



Newsletter – May 1<sup>st</sup> 2011

Hello. It has been two months since our last newsletter – we decided to make the change from monthly to two monthly, partly to reduce the work involved in their production, but mostly to counter the “Oh! it’s just the newsletter – I’ll think about reading it when I get round to it” syndrome. I hope that you find them informative and, if so, please don’t hesitate to forward them to your friends and colleagues. Please contact me if you feel: a) you would like to return to the monthly cycle, b) that you would like to have a different format, and c) that you might like to offer any other comments. As you can see I am beginning to acquire an acceptable level of beaurocratic awareness! We shall also be accompanying the newsletter with the diary for the following two months.

The last couple of months have been, as the football pundits say, “a game of two halves”. March was full of new developments, whilst April has been more a “get on and doing” month.

We have seen the last of our autumn and spring programme of education and awareness meetings. Two excellent talks – Kevin Wegg who is “Mr. Telecare” for the County, showed just how much easy-to-use reasonably-priced technology is available to help carers and cared-for manage in their own homes – Dr. Paddy Fielder gave us his insight into the way the NHS changes will affect us all. Many thanks are due to all of our 12 speakers who, over the 6 evenings gladly gave their time. And special thanks to Joan Read and Doreen Balaam for our refreshments. We look forward to recommencing in the autumn – we will reflect on our experience and, maybe, change the format and organisation a little. Come the summer, I will be looking for speakers who are happy to share their experience and insight with our audiences.

Also in March, we held the first of our “special” Carers’ Club afternoons where apart from the usual tea, chocolate cake, and chat, we had both a screening of archive films of Suffolk, and the services of a professional reflexologist (it was so successful that we hope that both will become regular features of our activities. Thank you Pam Harling-Challis, and thank you Jean Parnell.

**The Memory and support Clinic** started at the beginning of March. We believe that this will make a big difference to carers, and those they care for, who are going through a very emotional and stressful period. By providing a local and familiar setting with a friendly and social atmosphere we can show that there is care and support here for them when they need it and that there will always be someone to talk to, advise them, and put them in touch with the

“right” person – a helping hand. The first clinic was very successful. The bringing together of the health and social care aspects with the voluntary support looks like it will really work well. So much so, that following the next clinic in May, we shall be holding them every month thereafter.

Apart from the regular activities, clubs and lunches, things have been going on to ensure that we will be secure for the long term. We are already funded for the next couple of years – and grateful thanks to Mid Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership – but we would like to be able to plan for the long term without having to worry about whether we will be able to continue our development of more and better support and services. I have enormous confidence that despite the need for savings in the local authorities and the NHS that it will all work out.

Although the Debenham Project is not a campaigning organization there have been a couple of areas of concern where we have been prompted to comment to the recent County Council consultations. Firstly, with regard to the Council’s plans to leave the provision of residential care to the private sector, our concern is that this may lead to the closure of smaller local homes in favour of much bigger schemes located in and around the larger towns. Secondly, in respect of the decision to minimize the County’s financial support of our library, we are concerned that there has been no recognition that the library is an important and visible partner to the project, and also that their professional staff are involved in far more than “books and DVDs”. They have been helping carers “one on one” just because they see it as, not only their job, but also something that they know is important in helping the elderly frail in our community – just ask Melanie Wood (or myself) about some of the stories.

Finally one more piece of good news – the project has been given an award of £7,000 from the Mental Health Capital Bid (Suffolk County Council) to help us improve the “back office” equipment and the facilities in Dove Cottage. I know infrastructure doesn’t always catch the imagination but it is nonetheless important that we are not struggling to cope. Getting money for these things in the voluntary sector is never easy and there are usually strings attached but it shows that the local authorities are prepared to give support to projects such as ours, even in these difficult times.

As always, thanks to all in Debenham, the surrounding villages, the local authorities, and our partners for all their support. We have continued to receive private donations towards the work of the project. It is difficult to report each one as they deserve but, make no mistake, each has a value far in excess of the “figure on the cheque”. Each shows us the care that the giver feels for those whom the project seeks to help – thank you.

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](http://www.the-debenham-project.org.uk) where you can access all our newsletters, and much more. With best wishes, kind regards,

Lynden