



Newsletter – September 2nd 2012

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Hello everyone,

As I walk Nelly, our Labrador-cross, over the fields first thing in the morning I begin to notice a change in the air – summer may not yet be over but autumn is pressing and it will not be long before it makes its presence known. It reminds me that while our current services and support continue to develop, there is a lot which goes in the project “behind the scenes” which is very important for not only our longer term future but also to help other communities. This month I am highlighting just a couple of items.

1. Caring in the Community is taking root! Over the last couple of months I have sensed another change – there are the beginnings of a movement, an awareness that Suffolk communities are wanting to “do something” to help those who care for someone with dementia. I have previously mentioned Pam Bell’s volunteer carers group at Wickham Market but there are more and more communities wanting to “get on and do something” to help. I am aware of exciting steps being taken in Saxmundham, with the setting up of the Smile Café for carers and those with dementia, and with Dr. John Havard’s initiative to create a team of volunteers who can offer temporary live-in care so that someone may be able to quickly return home from hospital. I also know people who have been quietly “getting on” in places like Westleton with their Parish Nurse scheme, Framlingham with their Care Wardens, and Elmswell taking over and running their Alzheimer’s Carers Club. These are just examples of communities who are keen to build upon their achievements. Over recent months we have been sharing our experience with The Debenham project with other villages and towns through two important projects:

The Partnership with Older People in Suffolk (POPS) which is a collaboration between Age UK, Suffolk County Council and The Debenham Project to find out what services communities feel they want, and to encourage and help support community-based support activities.

The Dementia Enabled Village Project (DEV-P) which is funded by the Norfolk and Suffolk Dementia Alliance. Sue Ryder and Age UK are working together with our help exploring how the sort of approach pioneered by the Debenham Project might be stimulated in two rural areas in East Suffolk.

I am sure that all the goodwill that is being shown will bear fruit with time

2. The Prime Minister's Challenge on Dementia was launched in April this year and probably the most important element lies in the campaign to develop about 20 "dementia friendly communities" in towns, cities and villages throughout the UK. The main feature of this is to encourage large and small communities to become **dementia friendly** by increasing local awareness, developing local support services, and providing local access to quality advice and information. I personally feel that, knowing the goodwill that exists in communities in Suffolk alone, that, in numbers, this is not a particularly challenging target – but I would say that, wouldn't I? However, it should never be a matter of "never mind the quality, feel the width", it should be about demonstrating that care is not a service to be counted in statistics but in the impact that it has upon those individuals around us who really need our help. Our trustees are very proud that The Debenham Project was launched three years ago when discussions about the "Dementia Strategy", the "Big Society", and the "Ageing Population" were in their infancy – in fact we hadn't even heard of them - and yet today we are one of the very few communities in the UK that might be able to lay claim to the title "dementia friendly". Certainly, we believe that Debenham has gone a long way towards being able to say that:

1. People are concerned about their friends and neighbours who are looking after someone who seems to have memory problems?
2. The local shops and businesses are aware of those with dementia and relate to them with empathy, and make sure that they are "looked after".
3. If someone becomes "confused and lost" somebody will make sure that they are taken home.
4. There are local people that family carers feel able to share their problems with.
5. There is a general awareness of the symptoms associated with dementia, the impact it can have on family carers (especially partners), and the probable numbers in their community.
6. Some form of local support and access to information and advice.
7. The local GP practice takes a "special interest" in dementia.

Clearly, these are only a set of "indicators" and in some aspects, such as ensuring local access to services, we have gone well beyond.

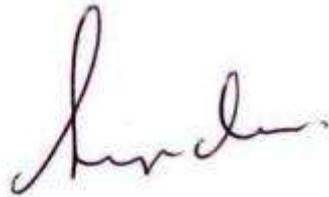
It is by virtue of the goodwill and efforts of Debenham people and those in the surrounding villages that the project has succeeded and in so doing has become an example for others. The Prime Minister's Challenge is a national campaign but we have been asked to directly contribute our understanding towards the campaign. So we are being consulted with by The Alzheimer's Society, Age UK, the North East Dementia Alliance, and the Norfolk and Suffolk Dementia Alliance.

3. Projects in Hand. I reported in our last newsletter that we had launched two new projects – the Research Project which is finding out how we can encourage carers and cared-for to seek help earlier, and the Carers Co-op trying to improve the availability of top quality professional care. Both of these are now well under way and we are very pleased with their progress. Many of you will have been asked to assist and the response so far reflects how much the community is willing to help. One date that you might like to put in your diary is 12th September (7.30 pm) in Dove Cottage when Sam Cage is inviting anyone interested in volunteering to help family carers in an emergency, attend an important meeting, or have an occasional break, to come along and find out more – The First Responders of Care". For

more details see the posters and the Parish Magazine.

If you would like to know more about our work and services please see our display in the Post Office, ring 01728862003, call in at the Library Resource Centre, or visit our website at <http://www.the-debenham-project.org.uk/>. Past newsletters are archived on the website.

With my very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lynden', written in a cursive style.

Lynden Jackson (Chairman)