



Newsletter – 7th November 2012

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Hi everyone,

How a couple of months does fly by! Each time I get up after writing the newsletter I wonder whether there will be enough progress, news and events to fill a couple of pages next time. And each time I sit down to write the next newsletter I have to choose what to include and what to leave out. I can understand how newspaper editors feel! This month is no different – our project continues to develop and catch the imagination both locally and “abroad”.

1. Spreading the word: Our priority is to do the very best that we can to support those in Debenham and the surrounding villages who are trying to cope with the impact of dementia on their lives. Part of that is to respond to requests to “tell our story” to other communities. By explaining how The Debenham Project has flourished over this past 3 years, not only can we encourage other Suffolk villages and towns to try to set up something along similar lines, but also help in the battle to fund our work year by year by confirming the importance of projects such as ours.

This activity sometimes extends beyond the County as the reputation of the project has spread even into “government” circles. Last month we were asked to give a paper about the project to a Future East seminar in Cambridge. This is a regional advisory body that prepares reports for the Minister and disseminates its findings to the other regions throughout the UK and NI. This month I have been invited to give a talk to an “Inside Government” conference in London. So you see, what is happening in Debenham can have an impact on how carers of those with dementia are supported throughout the nation.

2. 3 Years On: As I say, “time flies”. It is just 3 years since The Debenham Project was formally launched at The Community Centre. In that time it has grown and evolved to become a leading example of how a community can try to “make a difference” for all those family carers (and those they care for) who are coping with the impact of dementia on their lives. However the success of the project not only lies in the services and activities it has developed, but also in the way that, it seems, the level of general awareness and

understanding of the illness is so much greater than it was when we started – I hope and believe that it is no longer something that we are afraid to talk about “in the street”, and husbands, wives, partners, sons, daughters and friends are more able to reach out for a bit of advice and support.

So it was appropriate that we took stock of our achievements. I have always argued that community projects should not be primarily measured in terms of the “numbers” and the “throughput”, as what they are all about is making a difference in the quality of life for individual people who may be struggling to cope. However, that is not to say that the statistics are unimportant – they provide convincing evidence that what we are doing is needed and valued – they provide convincing evidence for us to obtain the funding we need – they provide convincing evidence that we are making inroads into one of the greatest problems that is facing our ageing population.

Therefore, we have just produced three new publications:

The 2nd edition of our booklet [“This is: The Debenham Project”](#) which revises and extends last year’s 1st edition. It describes what the aims of the project are and how we have implemented those ideals – in a sense it says “this is what our community has done”.

[“Progress Report – 3 Years On”](#) which reviews our achievements in supporting our local carers and those they care for. I hope you will be proud to know that we have helped about 60% of the estimated number of families coping with dementia in some way, ranging from advice and information to regular participation in one or more of our services and activities. We should compare this with a figure of only 36% of the estimated number of people in Suffolk with dementia who have a diagnosis – we are “punching far above our weight”.

Many will remember last May when Sian Lockwood spent 2 very intensive days exploring our project on behalf of The Rowntree Foundation (This is one of the most influential research organisations in the field of health and social care). She has prepared a (long) report for the project ([“The Debenham Project - A case study ”](#)) as an independent assessment of our project.

All of these can be found clicking on the above links or on the home page of our website www.the-debenham-project.org.uk and we shall be distributing our booklet to all family carers, volunteers and supporters of the project.

3. The Carers’ Co-op and Debenham On-Call: Over the last couple of months Sam Cage has been working very successfully to get The Carers Co-op and our volunteer carers group up and running. So far we have 3 self-employed carers and another couple of possibilities who would like to be part of the Co-op. We hope, eventually, to have a team of about 12 top quality carers who can provide “local carers for local people” professional care ranging from basic services to specialist later-stage and end-of-life support.

On the volunteer side of things we now have 16 (yes 16!) local people who have offered to be trained and become part of what they have decided is to be known as “Debenham On-Call”. It will offer emergency and occasional short-time care support and cover. I confess that I thought that 4 or 5, or perhaps half a dozen, would be the likely response. How wrong can you be! – yet another demonstration of how much goodwill and commitment there is in our community – thank you.

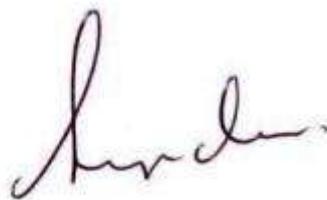
4. Donations and Fund Raising: I make no apology for acknowledging all those individuals and groups who have felt that they would like to support us with a financial donation. I have often been approached by someone who quietly says “just put that in your pocket for the project” – it touches me deeply. There are also the local clubs and organisations that have privately decided that they would like to help with our work and “out of the blue” I get a cheque. Just on occasion, I do know that an organisation has chosen The Debenham Project as its nominated charity for a year. One such organisation was The Ufford Park Tuesday Golf Club. However, imagine my surprise and delight to be invited to lunch with them and to receive a cheque for £1,400. I do not know how to properly show our gratitude to so many who have taken our project to their hearts and given so generously. So this is just a simple “thank you” to you all.

I have in the past mentioned that we have not hitherto mounted an active fund raising activity. However, we have to be realistic – over the next few years funding is going to be very difficult. The Debenham Project has been fortunate in the financial support that it has been given by the local authorities, the Dementia Alliance, the Suffolk Foundation, and other agencies. We are fairly secure for the next year, but, on average it costs about £8,500 to run the project for a year and, on top of this, we have to bid for funds for new projects and special activities such as the Carers Co-op, the Research Project, etc. So, we are now looking towards encouraging those who may not be aware of The Debenham Project, but who want to donate to a local charity to visit <https://localgiving.com/charity/thedebenhamproject>. It makes giving easy and automatically adds both the 25% tax rebate and any other government sponsored matching funding.

5. Training and Awareness: Many of you will have noticed that the Government is aiming to “train” 1 million volunteers as “dementia friends” as part of the Prime Minister’s Challenge. I understand that much of this is aimed towards banks, shops, councils, hospitals, libraries and other organisations. Here in Debenham we have already moved a long way along the path to “dementia friendliness” but we shall also be playing our part with formal dementia awareness training for our volunteers. Additionally, we shall be running a local public awareness programme designed to encourage a basic understanding of the illness, how we can all help, and what support the Debenham Project provides.

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,



Lynden Jackson (Chairman)