



Newsletter – 3rd May 2013

In this edition:

1. **Exciting Ipswich Town FC Trial!** just to see the faces when they suddenly realised who had come to meet and chat with them was a joy.
2. **Out of Hours Support!** this family didn't get the support they needed.
3. **PCSO Chris Hands Over to PC Jayne!** I am sure you will all get to know her !
4. **The Prime Minister's Challenge comes to the Eastern Region:** an example of "excellent practice" ...

Hi Everyone,

We could be forgiven for thinking that summer has actually arrived – at any rate the sunshine has brought out the “smiles” and “greetings” that make such a difference in the way we all feel. So, of course, this newsletter looks forward positively to the future but with a question mark about one important issue.

Exciting Ipswich Town FC Trial: You might be forgiven for thinking that this is about a new youngster whose talent has been recognised and might be destined for a great sporting future. No! It is about a very special initiative targeted at the other end of the age spectrum.

Steve Robbins, who lives in the village, regularly visits someone who was one of our long-standing participants in the Carers Club and Info café and the Cross Green Food 'n' Friends lunch club until he had to go into residential care. He and Steve have a great common "passion" - football - and although he finds it very difficult to communicate, it is clear that he enjoys Steve talking about it and he can still remember much of his time as a professional footballer. Steve came to me at the back end of last year with the idea that he could set up a club where football enthusiasts with memory difficulties and symptoms of dementia could socialise and share their reminiscences. It's a great idea, particularly as men are usually difficult to engage with - but what if together we persuaded Ipswich Town Football Club to lend its support? – perhaps they would even be prepared to sponsor and promote it.

Well! The result of Steve's efforts is that ITFC have enthusiastically welcomed the proposal and have already generously hosted a “trial” meeting of the club just a few days ago. **It was a very special occasion indeed.** The Champions Lounge was filled with laughter and the buzz of people sharing their memories and reliving those hey days of Ipswich when the club, led by Sir Alf, and Sir Bobby, rocketed through the leagues to the very pinnacle of football achievement. The players were international stars and they still are – We can't thank Alan Hunter, John Wark, and Brian Hamilton, of that incredible period, for offering to come and get involved – just to see the faces when they suddenly realised who had come to meet and chat with them was a joy. I cannot really describe how it felt to be a part of it – it was a privilege. It also confirmed that there is no such thing as being unable to enhance the quality of life for those with serious memory problems and dementia – it often just needs someone like Steve with his passion for football to 'unlock' the memories and open up an animated discussion or a treasured recollection.

Of course, this could not have happened without the vision and hard work of Steve and his small team, the generosity of ITFC and involvement of Pat and Hannah, and everyone who has helped – so many thanks.

We hope that this will be the start of, eventually, an important county-wide support group. Now we all have to develop the project, put in place all those bits and pieces that are necessary, and make it a special feature of Suffolk's dementia support scene. Since setting out, we have found that similar schemes have already been set up in Scotland and also at Everton FC which are proving to be great successes.

2. Coping with the Crisis Out of Hours: You may remember in my last letter I talked about how the NHS and the Social Services in Suffolk are responding to the challenges that dementia presents, and how they are developing much improved support services. Unfortunately, the way that cases involving dementia are handled “out of hours” is regularly not so positive. Recently, we had a case of a family going into crisis on a Friday evening with the end result that the person with dementia was eventually admitted to hospital during Sunday night. Said like this, it doesn't sound too bad, but when I tell you that the case involved multiple calls to the out of hours GP services, two ambulance call-outs, and a separate police attendance, it is clear that this family didn't get the support they needed. This, almost certainly, was not because the professionals concerned weren't trying to do their best – it seems to be to do with the way the “system” works, or, in this case, didn't work. So, we are hoping that by asking for this case to be looked into, we will be able to find ways of improving things and reducing the risk of similar situations in the future.

3. PCSO Chris Hands Over to PC Jayne: Last time, I mentioned that our local PCSO, Chris Bales, had “joined the team” and would be linking the Police, Fire Service, and Ambulance Service to The Debenham Project so that we can try to help out in an emergency involving someone with memory problems or dementia. Well! In the manner of these things, no sooner was it done than he was whisked off to take up a new appointment in Bury St. Edmunds. However, in his place, we now have PC Jayne Gardiner and I am sure you will all get to know her - in a nice way! - over the coming months. We have already been working successfully together.

4. The Prime Minister's Challenge comes to the Eastern Region: Finally, I thought you would like to know that The Secretary of State, Jeremy Hunt, and his ministers are fronting a number of regional conferences throughout the UK promoting the “Prime Minister's Challenge on Dementia”. We have been asked to give a presentation and display for this Ministerial Roadshow in Cambridge as an example of “excellent practice” in the care of those who have to cope with the impact of dementia in their daily lives. It is yet one more example of the importance of how communities can help families cope.

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)