



Hello everyone,

It occurs to me that over the last few years we have had a lot of new residents in the Debenham area and that they may not know what we are about. So I thought a few words might be helpful. Almost six years ago a public meeting was held in Dove Cottage to try to increase awareness of the problems that dementia presents and to try to find ways of providing practical and emotional support for those families who are having to cope with the impact of the illness on their lives. The Debenham Project came into existence, developed, evolved and has since become an established feature of the dementia support scene in Suffolk. It now offers a whole range of volunteer-based support services and activities ranging from Advice and information, to Carers Club and Info Café, to CAMEO and lunch clubs, to transport and exercise therapy, etc. In fact we will try to provide anything that it seems will help to make “living with dementia” just a little bit easier. If pressed to say exactly how and why it has continued to be successful and not struggled, I would probably say it was firstly, down to the tremendous goodwill of so many caring people, secondly that it is firmly rooted in the actual business of caring, and thirdly that it is a community-led project with a clear local focus, i.e. on helping family carers and those they care for in Debenham and the surrounding villages. It is a small and very local “doing” charity and yet over the years the project has become recognised for its innovative approach not only throughout Suffolk but also on a national scale. It is routinely cited as a model and standard to aim for. It goes to show that “you don’t have to shout loudly” to make a difference - often it is better to just “get on and do something”.

So, as you can imagine, we often get requests to share our experiences and understanding with other communities and organisations – to help in shaping the future of dementia care and support in Suffolk (and beyond!). Usually this is in the form of a presentation, but recently seven participants in the project were involved in an “engagement” (a fancy management term for asking family carers, volunteers, support workers, etc to say what is important) to determine the NHS and Suffolk County Council’s priorities for spending the available money on dementia support services. The draft conclusions clearly show that dementia care (for carers and those they care for) should be local and focused on the community – providing continuity of care, developing caring relationships, and bringing the services to those who need them. These are principles which I hope have been and always will be central to The Debenham Project.

Until next time, wishing you a very Happy Easter.

Best wishes, Lynden Phone 01728 862003 Website: www.the-debenham-project.org.uk

P.S. If you need to borrow our wheelchair, don’t hesitate to ask.