



Hello everyone,

When the project was launched in 2009, only a few rudimentary services existed - an advice and information centre, an activities and social hub, a Food 'n' Friends lunch club, a website, and a confidential telephone helpline. It was all pretty rudimentary and fragile – but it was there. It existed. It worked. It helped. Since then, the project has grown and matured to become recognised as a leader in the field of community-based dementia support. Some offerings, such as the telephone line have been superseded by statutory agencies, but that is ok - the project doesn't believe in continuing to deliver services that can be better provided by others – whilst others have been introduced - the project definitely does believe in exploring new opportunities and ideas. Recent examples are its involvement in Suffolk's new "Dementia Together" support service, and its new "One to One" family support team. It is the latter that I want to tell you about this month.

Many families successfully manage to cope with the impact of dementia on their lives in the early and middle stages of the illness without the intervention of the NHS and Social Services. However, they often say that they felt left to cope on their own one following the initial diagnosis and that they would value being able to periodically contact someone familiar for assistance at times of difficulty. We have initiated "One to One" so that there will be someone who can "come alongside" who understands your situation and can "be there for you" to be a listening ear and help you through when times get really difficult. They are not there to take away your problems, but to help you cope. At the moment there are 8 members of the organisation – all volunteers – 6 of whom bring their past skills in general practice, hospital nursing, social work, dementia support, and community nursing together with 2 leading health and social care professionals - a senior mental health consultant, and a senior mental health practitioner. They make an ideal team with our local One to One volunteers being able to call upon the active support of senior professionals as and when needed. Already each of our volunteers is paired up with an individual/family and developing the sort of relationship that we hope offers the contact and support that can make the difference between struggling and coping – it is more than befriending but it doesn't "disable" by seeking to "take over" or be an "on call" care support service. I believe this to be a unique experiment in community-based health and social care support – it seeks to link the potential of those who have retired from professional careers with the needs of community-based care in order to make a real difference.

Finally I must especially thank two of our wonderful benefactors, Mike and Lyn Rouse. Each year, The Debenham Project holds a very special garden party and invites everyone - carers, cared-for, participants, volunteers, donors, etc. - who, over the last year or so, have contributed to our success. This event only exists because of the exceptional generosity of Mike and Lyn, who not only give over their garden, but also organise everything that makes this a classic English garden party - setting, buffet, marquee, music, and most of all, those people whom we try to help and those who do the helping. It is our way of saying thank you to "our family".

With best wishes, Lynden

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www.the-debenham-project.org.uk