



Trustees' Annual Report for the period

From	Period start date			To	Period end date		
	1	APRIL	2022		31	MARCH	2023

Section A Reference and administration details

Charity name THE DEBENHAM PROJECT (DEMENTIA - CARING FOR THE CARERS)

Other names charity is known by

Registered charity number (if any) 1133501

Charity's principal address

C/O 23 HIGH STREET	
DEBENHAM	
STOWMARKET, SUFFOLK	
Postcode	IP14 6QL

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

	Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
1	L JACKSON	CHAIRMAN		
2	R W R COCKERTON	TREASURER		
3	DR P FIELDER	TRUSTEE		
4	M ROUSE	TRUSTEE		
5	MRS G SHACKLOCK	TRUSTEE		
6	R.BLACKWELL	TRUSTEE		
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Names of the trustees for the charity, if any, (for example, any custodian trustees)

Name	Dates acted if not for whole year

Names and addresses of advisers (Optional information)

Type of adviser	Name	Address

Name of chief executive or names of senior staff members (Optional information)

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Section B Structure, governance and management

Description of the charity’s trusts

Type of governing document (eg. trust deed, constitution)	TRUST DEED
How the charity is constituted (eg. trust, association, company)	TRUST
Trustee selection methods (eg. appointed by, elected by)	ELECTED BY EXISTING TRUSTEES

Additional governance issues (Optional information)

<p>You may choose to include additional information, where relevant, about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • policies and procedures adopted for the induction and training of trustees; • the charity’s organisational structure and any wider network with which the charity works; • relationship with any related parties; • trustees’ consideration of major risks and the system and procedures to manage them. 	<p>Organisational Structure: The charity has operated successfully for 14 years and over that period it has, we hope, successfully adapted to the changing dementia scene. However, the trustees are anxious that it should continue offering high quality support for many years to come. This will require recruiting the next generation of trustees and leadership.</p> <p>Relationships with related organisations: The charity is committed to providing support services, information and advice, and referral to professional organisations. Originally, the Project’s model of care was based upon local volunteers delivering the major volume of support in its groups, activities and services but also being able to informally call on the professional support capability of the major charities when appropriate. During the period 2014/15 due to the financial uncertainty and cutbacks in funding by the local authorities, etc. this ceased to be viable for those charities.</p> <p>In response, this charity became entirely staffed by volunteers and recruited retired volunteers with relevant career experience to help fill the skills shortfall and offer the advice, information and support that previously would have been given by current professionals. However, in 2016/17, the joint NHS/Adult Care commissioners for Suffolk introduced a county-wide service called “Dementia Together”. This innovative service was based upon providing community-based <u>voluntary</u> dementia support services for carers and cared-for which are directly backed up by a professionally staffed central hub. The Debenham Project, was a founder member and local support provider for the Debenham area and was represented on its “Operational Management group. We believe that this service proved a notable success for Suffolk. This model continued to unchanged up to the end of April 2022. However, the contract has been re-let in favour of The</p>
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Alzheimer's Society supported by Suffolk Family Carers. The close relationship between The Debenham Project and the staff of the only Suffolk County Council funded dementia support agency has effectively ended. We hope that under the new management it will be renewed (see below).

The trustees remain concerned that:

1. The local Authority/NHS contract for the provision of its dementia support service (Dementia Together) has been re-commissioned as Dementia Connect. The charity's ability to refer clients to and work with the new supplier (Alzheimer's Society) may be significantly affected.
2. The statutory (NHS and Local Government) authorities have, and continue to be, reluctant to significantly re-balance expenditure from the provision of acute care, crisis management and intervention care to local support, prevention and chronic ailment care i.e. they continue to concentrate on the management of illness (and particularly the elderly frail) by short term clinical and crisis intervention approaches. It is a source of worry that this suggests there is still a reluctance to treat community-based care as a priority.
3. That the underlying culture of the NHS, Local Authorities, and major charities will continue to fund/encourage a top-down care-management organisation rather than the much more flexible, person-centred, and responsive bottom-up model that is central to the way The Debenham Project operates.
4. That local authority, NHS and other sources of funding for the day-to-day operating costs and volunteer expenses of community-led charities such as this one are very limited.

As at March 2023 there was little or no evidence of any substantial change.

Thus far, these concerns have not presented a financial or operational risk to this charity, However the situation is a cause of significant frustration, in as much as the work of this charity, and other community-based charities, is not rewarded for the probable reductions in numbers of, and delays to hospital admissions and/or permanent commitment to residential care.

Looking forward into 2023-24, the main concern for the Project lies with ensuring that we reach as many families as possible in our area who are living with concerns about dementia and encourage them to make contact. Financially, we feel that our income and reserves (see below) will be more than sufficient to meet the demand. Although the impact on both participants and volunteers of the past "Covid impacted years" has been very significant, we have recovered and are confident of responding to the local need for dementia support.

However, the trustees agreed that the Project needed to engage in a major review to ensure its continued relevance and long-term sustainability.

Summary of the objects of the charity set out in its governing document

TO RELIEVE THE NEEDS, AND TO PROMOTE AND PROTECT THE GOOD HEALTH OF PERSONS SUFFERING FROM DEMENTIA, AS WELL AS THEIR CARERS AND FAMILY, IN PARTICULAR BUT NOT EXCLUSIVELY, BY ASSISTING IN THE PROVISION OF SUPPORT, SERVICES, RESPITE AND GUIDANCE TO THE CARERS AND FAMILY OF SUCH PEOPLE. IT IS RECOGNISED THAT THIS OBJECT MAY BE FURTHERED BY EITHER GIVING SUPPORT OR SERVICES DIRECTLY TO THE CARERS, OR THOSE WITH DEMENTIA, OR JOINTLY IN DEBENHAM AND IN ITS IMMEDIATE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

The Debenham Project was proposed in April 2009, publicly launched in October of that year, and granted charitable status in January 2010.

With regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit, the charity/project developed a unique community-based approach to the support of carers of those with symptoms of dementia, and those they care for. The wide range of current services and activities (see below), created to help carers who are (or are close to) having to cope with the 24/7 care of a partner, father, mother, friend, or neighbour with dementia, had achieved viability, and medium to longer-term sustainability. However, the Covid pandemic has had a major effect, not just on the delivery of services, but also on the potential and nature of those living with dementia to engage with dementia support services.

The charity was asked to address the problems that dementia presents to our community and, especially, to those who care for someone with the illness. In less than 18 months, it provided a comprehensive range of services which were, and continue to be a leading example in their breadth and focus on the individual in need of help. During 2019-20 financial year these included:

The provision of information and advice, dementia awareness, 3 individual monthly social lunch clubs, fortnightly activities and social sessions, a fortnightly carers' club and info café, a weekly chair-based fit club, linking to respite care provision, support for those involved in diagnosis, supporting a small independent self-employed professional carers network, an informal transport network for medically related appointments, a professional care and domestic help register, a one-to-one support network, integration with the countywide dementia support service, and frequent special events.

After the Covid pandemic resulted in the closure of almost all the above activities in March 2020, the Project responded by changing its "hands on" / "face to face" approach to one of "keeping in touch" and "remote support" by phone, newsletter, e-mail and on-line communication as well as developing our website support package. This pattern continued well into the previous reporting period (2021 - 22). The current period has seen a return to a more normal climate.

The project has long argued for the need for dementia to be considered as a physical illness and distinctly and different from a mental illness. And, as such, it should have an independent voice. In the previous reports we mentioned that the charity was working with other key organisations in creating a unique **Dementia Forum** within the national "Healthwatch" structure. This was realised in Suffolk and it is has been taking the lead as "The Voice for the Carer and Cared-For" of those who are living with the impact of dementia on their lives in our county. In the latter part of the 2020-21 The Debenham Project was a key contributor in the Dementia Forum researching and successfully arguing

Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit in relation to these objects (include within this section the statutory declaration that trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit)

for the creation of the **Suffolk Dementia Action Partnership**. We were also involved in a special group seeking to improve the way consultants, doctors and other professionals deliver a diagnosis of dementia to patients and their carers. Throughout this financial year the Project continued to support and actively contribute to both these organisations by sharing its understanding and experience of practical dementia support in the community. We believe that this involvement aligns with the Commission's guidance on public benefit. However, the trustees are aware that the objects of the charity are very clearly focused on delivering support to Debenham and its surrounding villages and that such county-wide activities as involvement in the Forum and Partnership, must "reasonably" benefit, albeit indirectly, our community.

For a fuller description of the Project visit: www.the-debenham-project.org.uk and The Debenham Project - 4th Edition - May 2018

Additional details of objectives and activities (Optional information)

You **may choose** to include further statements, where relevant, about:

- policy on grantmaking;
- policy programme related investment;
- contribution made by volunteers.

Grantmaking: The project has not made grants to individuals or organisations. The trustees have no plans to change this policy. However, the policy of providing its services free to participants, or at a nominal (subsidised) cost, has continued.

Volunteers: This is, almost totally, a volunteer-based enterprise. The project has received a tremendous amount of goodwill from the community and this is reflected in a very healthy volunteer base. There are currently approximately 50 regular volunteers with about a further 40 local people who have offered their support on an occasional basis. It is the project's policy that we seek to avoid asking volunteers to do more than about ½ day per fortnight and so prevent the unsustainable situation of the "few who do it all". We are also fortunate in being able to call upon a small group of volunteers who, prior to retirement, have been senior professionals delivering frontline support in general practice, community and other nursing disciplines, social work and dementia advisory services, etc. These have successfully delivered our "One to One" support service. Because of the Covid crisis the Project has not needed to call on the vast majority of the volunteer workforce except in a very limited way e.g. task leaders keeping in touch with participants by phone, treasurer monitoring the financial position, trustees being consulted on policy and management decisions.

Policy programme related to (external) investment: The trustees

continue in their concern that the statutory authorities (particularly the Suffolk County Council in collaboration with NHS Suffolk) are failing to give priority to funding community-based dementia support and crisis prevention.

1. They consider this as a major restriction in the potential for this and other local/community charities to respond to the current and future needs and essential support of the elderly frail.

2. They also continue to criticise Suffolk County Council's unwillingness to fund the ongoing expenses of volunteers and project costs as creating a negative image and a serious barrier to effective engagement with the community. In its conversations with those in other areas, it is clear that it is not a unique situation, and we ask the Charities Commission to investigate.

3. However, they have remained pleased by the success of "Dementia Together" – Suffolk's dementia support service which seeks to encourage and engage with community-based projects and dementia action alliances – although this represented only a redirection of existing funding, and a limited response to the needs of carers of those with dementia and those they care for.

Section D

Achievements and performance

Impact Statement for 2022-23

N.B. The total figures quoted below are "for the year".

Following the 2 previous Covid impacted years, 2022-23 was a much more constructive year with the recovery of our activities, groups and services as well as the major "A New Horizon" full review of the Project.

Maintaining contact: Whilst lockdown we continued keeping in touch and offering friendly and helpful conversation.

Parish Magazine articles – 11

Telephone Liaison calls – 100

Information, advice and individual support: The project continued to offer individual information, advice, assistance and signposting.

Telephone calls and E-mails (Other) – 20

E-mails (Follow up and info) – 10

Signposting (Dementia Together & other agencies) – 5 to 10

Groups and other Activities: Throughout the year the Project continued to successfully recover from the Covid crisis period. In addition, a second lunch club was started at Coopersfield, as well as the TLC (Talking, Listening, and Caring) peer support group was initiated.

Carers Club and Info Café (twice monthly) 20 to 25 participants per session

Fit Club (weekly) 12 to 14 participants per session

Cross Green Lunch Club (monthly) 10 approx. per occasion

Coopersfield Lunch Club (monthly) up to 16 per occasion

Transport (as required) 15 per month average

TLC (monthly) 3 or 4 per session

Section D

Achievements and performance

Project Review: After 14 years in operation the trustees agreed that it was time to carry out a full review of the Project with the objective of maintaining its success and sustainability for the long-term. This was completed by the end of March ready for presentation to the community at a public meeting on April 15th 2023. Key elements of the findings were:

- Universally, the Project had delivered its aims for the past 14 years
- It must respond to expected (and unexpected) change
- Recruiting the next generation of trustees and leadership
- Promoting our services, activities and support more actively
- Initiating an updated/new website
- Initiating new offerings

Events:

Both the “Debenham Project Grand Garden Party” and the “Day Out at the Seaside” proved extremely successful and greatly appreciated by all who attended. As ever, we cannot thank Lyn and Mike enough for hosting and organising the Garden Party for 130 guests, and Joy and her team for organising the Felixstowe event.

Other services: The Project continued to offer help and support informally with information and advice, one-to-one contact, signposting, and providing individual assistance with seeking Carers and Care Assessments, Powers of Attorney, Carer Allowances, etc.

Promotion: As result of the review, towards the end of the financial year the Project was proactively promoted to outlying (and a little beyond) parish councils and GP surgeries.

Other activities: Although the impact of the pandemic substantially reduced our involvement in various county and academic activities, we continued to support the development of better coverage and quality of support for families living with dementia across Suffolk:

- The Project continued to participate in “The Suffolk Dementia Forum” and “The Suffolk Dementia Action Partnership” as the primary bodies for advocating the viewpoints of carers and cared-for living with the impact of dementia.

Funding: The project continued to be well supported with individual donations and remained in a sound financial position. The shortfall situation of £5.5K in 2021-22 was recovered so that in 2022-23 income and expenditure closely matched. With regard to the reserves, the Project remained very healthy, which is an opportunity to consider how we might invest in a new venture.

Section E

Financial review

Brief statement of the charity's policy on reserves

Broadly, income has closely matched outgoings at approximately £14.5K leading to an unchanged level of reserves of £22K. The Trustees have hitherto aimed to maintain the charity's reserves sufficient to operate for between 1 and 2 years in an economic crisis with income falling rapidly and costs rising substantially. Although the Project had financially weathered Covid successfully, it was expected that during 2022-23 outgoings would markedly rise with the return to more normal operating conditions. However, it has been apparent that The Debenham Project's funding from local individuals and organisations is remarkably robust.

<p>Therefore, the Trustees' decisions in funding a research project, investing in improving the acoustics of our primary venue, and making a donation to The Debenham Hardship Fund have not reduced the reserves significantly.</p> <p>It is agreed that the Project will continue to seek new opportunities to utilise the reserves directly in developing future support services.</p>
<p>None</p>

Details of any funds materially in deficit

Further financial review details (Optional information)

You **may choose** to include additional information, where relevant about:

- the charity's principal sources of funds (including any fundraising);
- how expenditure has supported the key objectives of the charity;
- investment policy and objectives including any ethical investment policy adopted.

Funding: The charity has achieved a sound funding position based upon the distinction between "core funding", funding for "special projects", and "private donations".

To run and continue to develop the main services of the project has cost, averaged over the lifetime of the project, between £8,500 and £10,000 pa. The trustees believe this to be a reasonable budget figure which enables the project to both sustain its existing voluntary support services and activities and, also, to develop the project for the medium and longer-term.

During its early creation the Project was funded by a personal gift of £2,000 and a loan of £5,000 from two of its trustees. In the initial years, it benefited from grants from the local (district) authority (with a total grant of approximately £26,500 over 3 years).

In the "middle" years of the project we were very fortunate to receive significant funding from recognised charitable foundations eg AXA insurance, Sports Relief, Comic Relief, Waitrose, the Co-op, and Yorkshire B/S. And donations from local residents became important and significant.

More recently most of our funds have come through private donations, local community fundraising events, individuals engaging in personal challenges.

However, the Trustees continue to be concerned, in the general sense, that Central and Local Government remain **exceptionally reluctant to provide longer-term core funding to community projects** such as this one, even though such projects are directly supporting the mission of the NHS and Adult Care Services and enabling them to reduce their costs of service provision. This reluctance also includes setting constraints on the funds endowed for dementia support and the elderly frail which are administered by Suffolk Community Foundation and aimed at encouraging voluntary health and care projects.

To date, the project has been very fortunate that it hasn't needed to set a high priority on fundraising. It has continued to receive a significant amount of unsolicited funds from individuals and local organisations in recognition of the value to the local community of the work of the project, and donations made in memoriam. This has enabled us to not only resource our group and individual support activities and services, but also to provide funding for special events throughout the year.

The trustees continue to be agreed in the policy of maintaining the charity's reserves at a level of between 1 - 2 years annual expenditure in recognition of the essential need to ensure the charity's financial

sustainability.

Section F Other optional information

Additional information is available on the project's website at www.the-debenham-project.org.uk.

Section G Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)

Full name(s)

Position (eg Secretary,
Chair, etc)

Date

	Lynden Ashbrooke Jackson	Roger Cockerton
	Chair	Treasurer