



Dedicated to giving practical and emotional support to all in the Debenham area who care for those with dementia.

Relations with the Media Policy

The policy and system are needed in order to meet the requirements of how the project can best be promoted outside the local community and, at the same time meet the needs of the project and its partners to develop their relationships without, in any way, prejudicing the primary needs and privacy of those they support.

It is the Public Relations policy of the project that:

1. The project respects, and is committed to protecting the privacy, dignity, and confidentiality of the carers, cared-for, and other service users participating in the activities and services provided by the project. This has been agreed by the trustees as a basic condition of our relationships with the media, and an essential part of building trust and breaking down barriers.
2. The project will not be associated with any programme material that suggests that The Debenham Project is about saving money and/or "picking up the shortfall" created by the Government and local authority cuts.
3. The project will seek to encourage other communities to set up similar activities or to use our experience to the benefit of carers and cared-for coping with dementia.
4. The project will respond to requests for interviews only if there is a clear benefit to the local community, or it can be argued that it will enhance the status of the project at regional, national or international level.

The system for implementing the policy is as follows.

1. The chairman and another named trustee* are authorised to speak on behalf of the Trust, its activities, and its plans.
2. All requests for information, interviews, and other contact with the media must be passed to the chairman in the first instance and to the other trustee in the event of his/her unavailability.
3. The chairman and/or the other trustee may involve other members, volunteers, etc of the project (but not participating carers or cared-for) in any appropriate public relations activities.
4. The following notes are to be used as guidelines for any contact between the project and the media.
5. The chairman may divert from the above policy and guidelines but only with the expressed consent of the other trustee, and vice versa.

*Currently Dr. J.P.S Fielder

Notes

1. The project predates the debate about cuts and has been successfully "working together" for more than nine years with the full breadth of the professional agencies to enhance the quality of care which is available in a rural community such as ours.

2. It is a project that can "make a difference" because "it is different" in its approach, but it cannot, and will not, try to replace professional front-line resources. It seeks to draw in those resources to provide the most effective support of those who need them - we add value - in collaboration and cooperation.
3. This project would not have progressed and been, thus far successful, without the exceptional goodwill and (very real) support of the local authorities, the NHS, The charities, and other agencies.
4. We appreciate the difficulties that the banking crisis has presented to the local authorities and the caring sector but that, together, we will aim to achieve a quality of care and support for carers of those with dementia, and those they care for, which recognises their sacrifices and their needs. It may take longer than "yesterday" but we will get there "tomorrow".
5. The project is not, and never has been, about saving money. To suggest such a thing would "turn off" and demotivate all who volunteer, if only because "they care". In the long term, by investing in projects such as this one, significant savings will accrue but they will result from a new and more humane approach to caring for the more vulnerable in our community - one which is holistic and centred on the needs of the person and their family. The savings will arise from a reduction in the number of crises leading to emergency hospital admissions and expensive interventions by the 'Social Services', by a reduction in illness in both family carers and those they care for, and a reduction in the costs of treatment and social support because potential problems are addressed before they become a crisis.
6. The project was initiated at the end of April 2009 and publicly launched in that October with a nucleus of rudimentary services. These services have now been expanded, developed, refined, and consolidated. It will continue to evolve by working with, the local authorities, the NHS, the charities, local groups, and other agencies to increase the breadth, level, and quality of available support. The project's aim is to provide* all services which can be reasonably provided locally, and to ensure that those that cannot be provided locally are person-centred.
7. The current number of people (carers and cared-for) who are registered with the project is 101 (we are aware of others who are managing at the moment but who may value some help in the future). This represents about 65% of the estimated total number of families living with the impact of dementia on their lives in our catchment area. On average between 30 & 40 and carers and cared-for as well as a similar number of other elderly frail persons participate regularly in individual activities/services. We run fortnightly activities and social sessions, a fortnightly Carers' Club and Info Café, 3 lunch clubs each on a monthly basis, an information and advice service, and many other services.
8. There are over 100 volunteers who have offered their help, about 70 are involved on a regular basis, and about 30 support the project either on an occasional basis or have offered to do so. It is a philosophy of the project to have a lot of volunteers each doing a little rather than a few trying to do everything.
9. The project was, initially, funded through a combination of personal donations, an interest free loan from the trustees, and a grant from Mid Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership. Since then it has been able to secure other grant aided support from Mid Suffolk, Suffolk County Council, and other funding agencies. However, this has been more than matched by local donations, awards in recognition of its achievements, contracts for research, and fundraising. We are currently exploring arrangements for continued and balanced funding for the future.
10. The project has attracted considerable professional interest at regional and national levels for its community-led and directed approach with requests to present the project, our experience, and our ideas in a number of forums.

Additional Information

www.the-debenham-project.org.uk

The policy, system, and notes have been reviewed by the Trustees (May 2021) and agreed (15th May 2021) in the light of experience of use.

David Jackson

(Chairman)

15th May 2021