



Hello everyone,

“Suffolk Dementia Forum”

(The Voice for the Carer and Cared-For)

The project has long argued for the need for dementia to be considered as distinctly different from mental illness and, as such, should have an independent voice when it comes to NHS and local government funding and the provision of support services. Towards the end of last year I mentioned that the Debenham Project was collaborating with other key organisations in creating a unique “Dementia Forum” within the national “Healthwatch”** structure. This has been realised and, after a period of “finding its feet”, I am very encouraged by its enthusiasm to “get on and do things” and take the lead as the acknowledged **“Voice for the Carers and Cared-For”** living with the impact of dementia on their lives in Suffolk. The membership of the Forum comprises a wide range of people, all of whom are directly involved in providing, funding, and commissioning dementia support and in increasing awareness of the illness – projects like ours, family carers, cared-for, volunteers, service providers, dementia action alliances, local authority and NHS commissioners, care home providers, national dementia charities, etc.

The role of the group is to identify, monitor, and look into the concerns (and praise) of local dementia patients, their family carers, front-line professionals, etc. about the services and support that are available locally and across the county. This will enable us to raise these concerns with the relevant areas of the NHS, Suffolk County Council, and Suffolk’s Health and Well-being Board, and work with them to achieve real improvements. We are starting by exploring the experiences of people seeking and receiving a diagnosis, and the follow-up support. In the near future I will be asking our participants in the Debenham Project for their views. If there is anyone else who would wish to contribute, please let me know. We will also be taking part in a new project asking people what it’s like to live in our local care/nursing homes. That includes anyone who is currently a resident as well as their friends or relatives. Again, if you would like to share your experiences, good and not so good, please contact me. All your responses will be treated as confidential and anonymised.

And thank you for all your donations and support throughout the year. Please remember that we can receive donations via the Co-op (just ask for your dividend to be given to **609313**) and on-line using the button on the home page of our website (below). Also don’t forget, we have wheelchairs for loan if you need one for a few days.

With all my best wishes, Lynden

Tel. 01728 860348 www.the-debenham-project.org.uk

** “Healthwatch” is the national statutory organisation that, on a county basis, seeks to identify, monitor and look into the concerns that patients and clients may have about our health and social care services