



THE DEBENHAM PROJECT – AT A GLANCE



Dementia – Caring for the carers

This synopsis, written specifically for the Housing LIN website, is intended to draw together the key elements of the project with links to the project's own website and material for further information.

WHAT IS IT?

A community-led registered charity providing holistic, personalised support to family carers of people with dementia and those they care for, using local volunteers, and drawing in professional support where needed.

- Visit its website at:
<http://www.the-debenham-project.org.uk/>
- Sian Lockwood of Community Catalysts has written a case study¹ on the project:
<http://www.the-debenham-project.org.uk/downloads/articles/2012/121106report.pdf>
- The project brochure²:
<http://www.the-debenham-project.org.uk/downloads/booklet/121209booklet.pdf>
- Putting it all Together: A System for Care
http://www.the-debenham-project.org.uk/downloads/steeringdocs/Putting_it_all_Together_fdfge4

WHAT VALUES AND PRINCIPLES UNDERPIN IT?

“Three things have guided the Debenham project:

- Listen to carers and those they care for
- Get on and do something
- Have a vision”²

Central principles:

- To provide services in the local community – 7 or 10 or 14 miles away is too far
- To define and provide the services locally, drawing in the best professional support as required, and working in partnership with other local groups and services.

“If it's not good enough for my mother, it's not good enough” – the late Judith Hawkshaw OBE

WHAT IS THE VISION?

- “No-one should have to leave their family, friends, and neighbours in order to be cared for with love and dignity
- “No matter how frail we might become, we will still be able to be part of our community – to visit the shops and café, to have our grandchildren pop in, and to pass the time of day” in the High Street
- “No one should have to be admitted to hospital, or stay in hospital when they can be cared for in the community, by the community”²

The vision for the future seeks local integration of health care, social care, and housing for the elderly frail and includes “building and staffing future generation accommodation and nursing facilities appropriate to a rural community”²

WHO IS INVOLVED?

- Trustees – have legal responsibility for the project
- Steering Group – advises and makes practical arrangements
- Volunteers from the community who each do a little (but important) bit which is much better than a few who try to do it all – 100+ on the books, 30 to 50 help regularly
- Partners – a range of local organisations from the statutory, business, voluntary and faith sectors
- Professional co-workers – provide detailed or specialist knowledge, advice, consultation and assessment

WHAT DOES THE PROJECT OFFER?

The majority of the services on offer have been developed in partnership with other organisations:

- A confidential telephone support line provided over the weekend by trained volunteers
- Information and advice centre
- Debenham On-Call emergency and occasional short-time care support and cover provided by trained volunteers
- Group activities and social support sessions held fortnightly to provide carers and those they care for with respite, companionship, peer support, and intellectual interest
- Food 'n Friends luncheon clubs
- Medication and pharmacy support
- Carers' club and info café – fortnightly social get-together with professional outreach worker present
- The Fit Club providing gentle chair-based exercise
- Specialist support when attending memory clinic
- A range of one-off events
- A carers' co-op is being developed

WHAT MAKES IT WORK?

Some fundamental ingredients appear to include:

- Leadership – well-liked, flexible but determined
- Focus and vision – serving the local community with well defined boundaries and well targeted services
- Community – engagement, commitment and ownership
- Networks and partnerships
- Professional involvement where needed
- Awareness-raising – both of dementia and of the project
- Being centred on a natural population of 5 – 10,000 (village or small town) surrounded by smaller rural communities
- Having enough money – not a lot needed, but need not to have to spend time chasing it, nor be thrown off course by the way funding is defined

HOW IS IT FUNDED?

- Donations and grants

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For a range of other resources on housing and dementia, visit the Housing LIN's Focus on Dementia pages at www.housinglin.org.uk/housinganddementia