

October 20<sup>th</sup> 2020

Hi Everyone,

In this letter: **Where we stand: My crystal ball: Coping with a long winter: Nobody told me I would become a community worker: “Bumped” by Glenda**

**Where we stand:**

I am sure we have all been following the news about the rapid increase in COVID cases around our nation and especially in the North and the North West. I know that it is extremely worrying for us all but we can take a small measure of comfort that we live in a rural area with one of the lowest rates of infection in the country. However, the data clearly shows that the number of cases across Suffolk has clearly risen significantly and is likely to follow the same exponential pattern as elsewhere. Hopefully with the steps that the Government is taking we shall not reach anywhere near similar levels as in Liverpool, Newcastle and Nottingham. Our rural nature and absence of a large city culture will certainly help but we cannot be complacent – This virus is very difficult to stop rapidly spreading once it gets a foothold, no matter where. So please be careful, stick to guidelines, stay warm, and make sure you have your flu jab.

**My crystal ball:**

We are facing an extended period of trying for the second time to bring this virus under sufficient control that the Track and Trace system can manage to work effectively and the now famous R-Number can be kept below 1.0. I wish, like Mistress Meg, I could see into the future and predict when we will be able to put all this behind us and get on and live life normally, not worry about self-isolation and losing our jobs, enjoy calling into the pub for a pint and chat to whoever happens to be standing at the bar, invite friends to dinner, get that operation we need, etc. etc. It’s not that easy as we all know but it would be good to have an educated guess so that we could have something to look forward to, and make plans even if we may have to change them later on. However, I am quietly confident that by the end of the year the Oxford and other potential vaccines will have been proved safe, effective and lasting, even if it is not clear quite how long the immunisation remains active. I guess the Government will want to rapidly mount a vaccination programme to protect the elderly and vulnerable, health and social care workers, and other key workers starting as soon as possible in the New Year, say February/March time. And then offer vaccination to the rest of the population sometime in late Spring. So, I am looking forward to our being able to rebuild and resume the Project’s groups, activities and face-to face services in April. “HOW GOOD WILL THAT BE?”

**Coping with a long winter:**

April seems a long way off but, in the meantime, we will continue to keep in touch by phone and e-mail, and provide and grow our on-line activities and services. So far we have developed resources for seated exercise, relaxation, mindfulness, singalong, and nature. They can all be enjoyed at home with your family or on your own – they really can make a long-term difference in how you feel if you can make them part of your weekly routine. Meanwhile, Steve Robbins has been working on “Way Back When At Home” and, to start, has produced a number of memory boxes. Each box is filled with those nostalgic items that the moment you pick them out you are transported straight back to the time when they were every-day objects. And, in the Debenham Project way, I am sure we will be thinking up other ways of enjoying reminiscing with each other.

When it’s cold and wet outside what’s nicer than to hear from an old (or new) friend “just because I was thinking of you”. I wonder whether any of you have taken up the idea from my last newsletter to “Phone a Friend” or “Write a Letter”. Why not write down and share some of best memories?

**Nobody told me I would become a community worker:**

The Debenham Project has, over the years, become recognised well beyond the borders of Suffolk as an example of best practice in community-based dementia support and quoted by national professional organisations such as The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), and The Royal College of Psychiatry (RC Psych). Generally, our contribution has been in the form a “case study” or “exemplar” in the provision of dementia support. However, a couple of weeks ago I was contacted by Alan Twelvetrees the author of one of the bestselling textbooks for the study of social work and community development and asked if I might contribute to the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of “Community Work”. It seems that, without intending to, we may have something useful to teach the next generation of social care professionals about sustainable community-based support projects. I must admit that it will be a challenge but I hope something will come out of it that will encourage professionals to see community project development from a different perspective.

**“Bumped” by Glenda:**

In my last letter I mentioned that Pippa Kelly, a well-known blogger and podcaster on dementia, had arranged to record an interview last week with me about The Debenham Project. Well, she rang to apologise and ask if we could put it off for a week as she had the opportunity to interview Glenda Jackson. What could I say? “Of course, no problem, happy to oblige”. Not everyone can say that they have been “bumped” by Glenda! And not everyone can say they are appearing on the same bill as Glenda! Hey-Ho, is there such a thing as “celebrity status by association”? But seriously, it will be special to listen to her interview. The actress and former Labour government minister, revealed that her experiences of visiting the elderly during her political career helped inspire her to play Maud who has Alzheimer's in the BAFTA winning [BBC One drama Elizabeth is Missing](#), last November, her first return to television in 25 years. She is a major campaigner for better awareness and support for those living with the illness.

Finally, you can access all of our on-line help by visiting our new “[On-Line Resources](#)” page, where you can find the current version of our "Coronavirus - Local Information and Support" list, and our [News and Project Progress page](#).

I hope you find this letter useful and of some comfort at this difficult time.

With all best wishes,

Lynden