

“Caring for the Carers”

The Debenham Project is an innovative way of providing help and support on a local basis for people with dementia and those who care for them. The LSP provided funding to help launch the project and to assist with the running costs of the project's first year. This first year has seen the project go from strength-to-strength as it reaches out to carers and works collaboratively to provide them with practical and emotional support.

The project currently has 34 carers and 31 cared-for people on its books, which is thought to be about 30% of the total number of carers in the area. Around two-thirds of carers are actively involved in the project's activities, which include a Carers' Club and Info Café, Friends and Food lunch clubs, and medication and pharmacy support. The project also runs a confidential telephone service, a website, and an information centre with leaflets on various aspects of the project. They are able to give advice and provide complex information that is not readily available elsewhere. In June the Alzheimer's Society ran a Carers Information Programme in Debenham which was fully subscribed.

The importance of the support that the project provides is clear from the experience of one older couple. The elderly gentleman had been caring for his wife under increasing stress as her dementia worsened and she no longer wanted to leave the house. After contacting the Debenham Project the gentleman attended the June meetings and now the couple attend the Carers' Club together. This has made an enormous difference to their lives as they can now socialise regularly in a friendly environment.

Creating Positive Futures

From April to August 2010 Catch 22 and Suffolk Positive Futures used LSP funding to run a Teenage Kicks programme in Stowmarket. This provided free sessions of football to young people, who could just turn up and take part.

This is the project's third year, and it was clearly very successful. There were over 50 attendances each week, and it is estimated that the project reached around 150 young people during the summer. Older participants who had taken part in previous years returned and were able to volunteer informally as referees.

This year the project worked alongside Stowmarket Police to include some of the traditionally harder to reach young groups. By providing an activity for young people to take part in during the evening, Teenage Kicks also had a positive impact on the community as the Police saw a drop in anti-social behaviour and youth crime in the town during the project. Teenage Kicks provided a great opportunity for young people to be involved in a positive activity, do some physical activity, and meet new people and make friends.

Catch 22 and Suffolk Positive Futures also have funding from the LSP to run a boxing project from October to February/March 2011. This will run every Thursday evening and young people will be able to just turn up and join in.



Increasing visitor numbers at Thornham Walks

This year's events' programme at Thornham Walks has been a huge success, with some activity days attracting over 100 participants. Funding from the LSP has meant that more money has gone into running free activities for families, which have proved especially popular. Thornham Walks has also continued to provide valuable volunteering and educational opportunities.

The increased number of visitors to the site for events, education and volunteering has in turn created an increase in income as more people pay to park and visit the café. The Walks plan to become as self-sufficient as possible over the next few years, and the funding is giving staff the time to work out how best to do this whilst continuing to provide opportunities that are not available elsewhere in the north of the District. The Thornham Walks Countryside Officer explained: "we offer safe access to the countryside where people can walk on well-marked trails. Through our work we promote healthier lifestyles, a better understanding of the environment, and encourage families to get out and do something together."

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Introduction

This issue of the Mid Suffolk LSP magazine has been produced to update LSP members and Stakeholders on the progress of LSP-funded projects, focussing on those that have been funded over the last 18 months. The magazine looks at what progress the projects have made and how they are working to meet our Local Area Agreement themes and targets.

Needham Market Internet Café Thrives

The Needham Market Internet Café provides a warm and safe place for young people to go where they can access modern technology, play games, take part in activities and socialise. The facilities are completely free and have proved extremely popular with local young people.

Funding from the LSP has allowed the Needham Internet Café to purchase a Wii and to extend the hours of the Youth Worker. This has led to several improvements at the Café.

The extension of the Youth Worker's hours has enabled the Café to open up more space to young people. This space includes pool tables, table-football and TVs which can have games consoles plugged into them. Tom Barker, Managing Director of the Café, commented: "the kids are really chuffed that they can use the space, and they're really happy that they can play pool". The space has increased the amount of room for informal socialising, and has also given older teenagers the opportunity to have some responsibility over the space. Tom added "opening up the main room has made the atmosphere more manageable and relieved the stress on volunteers". This is important as there are sometimes as many as 40 young people using the café at once.

The Youth Worker, Natalie, has proved to be a hit with the young people, especially the girls who are enjoying having a younger female role model working at the Café. Natalie has done some arts and crafts with the young people, including making clay pots and drawing. It is hoped that in the winter the Café will also be able to run some cookery courses.



The girls in particular really like the Wii, which can be placed in a separate area to give them some space to themselves where they can socialise in a less boisterous environment. The Wii and the employment of a Youth Worker have improved the gender balance at the Café, and the Café has received great feedback from the girls.

Around 60-70 young people now use the Café every day, and it has been extremely popular during the summer. There can be up to 20 young people waiting outside the doors when the Café opens at 2pm, and the building is generally very busy until around 6pm when some younger users go home. It is clear from the attitude of young people using the Café that they really value the facility and respect those who run it for providing them with somewhere to go and things to do.

Homeshield Plus helps 125 Mid Suffolk Residents since January

In January 2010 Homeshield Plus was launched with a team of 8 visiting officers and a coordinator delivering this pilot project across Suffolk through the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Community Safety Unit. Not only does the project make older peoples' homes safer, it also helps to improve their quality of life, health and wellbeing. The aim of the project is to visit some of the most vulnerable older people and families in their homes and provide them with a full home fire safety and security check. The officers also work through a comprehensive referral form that is used to identify areas of the clients' lives which Homeshield Plus's partners could help with.

Since the start of the project over 1,450 homes have been visited by the team, 125 of which were within Mid Suffolk. These visits have resulted in the installation of over 1,600 smoke detectors and 300 door security items, free of charge. Homeshield Plus have also made 920 referrals which have resulted in 1,766 actions being taken.

A recent visit to a Mid Suffolk resident is typical of the service that Homeshield Plus is able to provide as a result of LSP funding. The officer carried out a full home fire safety check and installed two 10 year life battery operated smoke alarms. The lady received advice about doorstep safety, night time routine, escape planning and weekly alarm testing. Homeshield were also able to refer her to The Royal British Legion for general support and to Warm Front who are in the process of providing a grant that will fund the cost of replacing the central heating system. This lady also wanted support to stop smoking and was referred to her local NHS unit. She has since described the service as "marvellous!"



Health Walks Re-launches

LSP funding has enabled Stepping Out in Suffolk to re-launch the Health Walks programme in Mid Suffolk. Newly trained and existing volunteer Walk Leaders ran a programme of 11 walks in Mid Suffolk between July and the beginning of September, and walkers could also join walks in other parts of Suffolk.

Since the programme began the walks have attracted more and more people. There are generally between 7 and 10 people on each walk, with some walks attracting as many as 15. There are now 73 registered walkers in Mid Suffolk, and it is hoped that as the scheme becomes established more Walk Leaders and walkers will come forward.

Feedback from walkers has been very positive. The health benefits of getting out and doing a physical activity is an attraction of the walks for many, some of whom are recovering from illness. Others find the social side especially important: living in a rural area can be lonely, and Health Walks provides an opportunity for local people to meet and socialise. The walks are also popular with older people who would not feel safe walking alone.

Volunteers also benefit from the scheme. They receive training that is accredited by Natural England, and enjoy organising and leading the walk. One volunteer explained: "Being a health walk leader has given me the opportunity to gain new skills and pass on my love of walking to other people. It is great seeing the enjoyment and benefits that the walkers gain from the walks that I have run." For many, volunteering can also be a way back into work.

Health Walks have a new programme with increased numbers of walks starting in Mid Suffolk in September.



Valuable Opportunities at MEAL

LSP funding has helped the Museum of East Anglian Life to continue to provide valuable volunteering and learning opportunities to local people and to expand opportunities for young people to get involved.

The work based learning programme has been particularly successful, reaching 120 people since 2007. This targets people who have difficulty finding employment, including those with physical and learning disabilities and people who have found themselves at a disadvantage in society. Participants learn skills in each of MEAL's areas of expertise, work on a project and acquire a first aid certificate and fire marshal certificate. At least 30% have gone on to further education, volunteering or employment: an impressive number given that for many the programme is their first experience of a working environment.



MEAL has also been able to expand volunteering and learning opportunities for 14-19 year olds. Pupils from local schools have come in on work experience, and students from colleges have been able to do practical work at MEAL to support the qualifications they are gaining. The Museum has also taken on pupils who have been excluded from school to give them the opportunity to do something different, gain experience, and continue to have something structured in their lives.

Feedback from all those participating in the volunteering and learning opportunities at MEAL has been extremely positive, with particular praise for the practical and hands-on nature of the activities. For many the social contact is also important, as is the stability and structure that MEAL helps some volunteers and work based learners bring to their lives.

The LSP funding also enabled the Museum to run a 'Happy MEAL' event aimed at young people and families to engage them in the work MEAL does and to let them know about opportunities at the Museum. Additionally, local clubs, crafts and organisations had stalls at the event to provide entertainment and activities. The event was very well attended with lots of people taking part.

It's all happening at Wingfield Barns...

LSP funding has helped Wingfield Barns to market and publicise the barns and to increase the numbers of people visiting and using the site. It also enabled the barns to install digital cinema equipment and to equip a pottery and ceramics studio.

Wingfield Barns publicise their events and the barns using several methods. The most cost effective of these is e-blasts, which go out to over 800 people every Monday with details of that week's events. They also have a banner advert on a local blog which reaches 8000 people, and use more traditional methods such as posters and leaflets.

The drive to market Wingfield Barns has led to an increased number of attendances at events, and more people have hired the barn for private functions. For example, a programme of film nights began with just a handful of attendances but now has an audience of 25-30. A recent production of Pride and Prejudice had an audience of 130. There have been 15 weddings at Wingfield since August 2009, and the barn has also been hired for birthday parties and group events.

