

Saxmundham Area Carers Support Group

Notes from 1st Meeting

Tuesday, December 5th at The Riverside Centre,
Stratford St. Andrew

1. 12 Carers attended. 3 more registered their interest but could not attend 1st meeting = 15 carers interested so far.
2. It was agreed that this was a healthy start and it was noted that some of the original flyers had yet to appear in local newsletters. It was thought that it would take at least 3 months to get the word out fully.
3. The meeting was unstructured, but held around one table. Many conversations were taking place simultaneously as carers were keen to exchange experiences and advice and information.
4. It was agreed that a monthly Tuesday morning, 10-12am at The Riverside Centre was the ideal timing.
5. The group voted unanimously to continue on a monthly basis and agreed a next meeting for Tuesday, January 30th - again 10-12am at The Riverside Centre - and to approach Suffolk County Council for continued financial support with hall booking and refreshments.
6. Everyone agreed the meeting was very welcome and overdue.

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7. To promote the next meeting it was suggested to broaden the flyer/poster circulation to include special needs schools, doctors/dentists surgeries and libraries.
8. It was agreed not to try to include Carees as this would become a complex operation, involving weekends (because of school/college) and extra room booking and appropriate separate supervision with meaningful activities.
9. However, it was agreed to broaden the scope to include all carers in the area ie include those carers also dealing with physical disabilities and mental health challenges, as many key issues such as respite and transport were common and a growing number of Carees had multiple disabilities.
10. It was agreed to make a special effort to reach and recruit younger Carers.
11. It was agreed to produce a "press release" for issue to the local media eg Radio Suffolk, EADT and local press and newsletters - after consulting with Suffolk County Council re their support.
12. It was decided to hold a couple more meetings before deciding on the possible need for a slightly more formal voluntary group setting (constitution/bank account) and planning more activity (eg newsletters and website) - to check the strength of numbers and direction.
13. Meanwhile the suggestion for the next meeting was to balance the informal/drop in approach with a group session (1030-11.30am) around the table focussing on one or two specific issues.

14. Most participants cited Community Nurses and the East Suffolk Disability Advice Service as their major information/advice source. A number of other sources were quoted as Social Services, School, the Internet, Voluntary Centres, Friends/Relatives/Colleagues and Suffolk Family Carers. There was a complaint that there too many little advice sources and it would be more helpful if a consolidated and up-to-date/updateable source eg booklet was created (as elsewhere).