

Annual Report of the Dengie D-Caf

1st October 2023 – 30th September 2024

A. Reference & Administration details

The Dengie D-Caf was established as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) on 19th October 2015, registration number: 1164014
Address for correspondence: 19 Garden Close, Althorne, Essex CM3 6BP

B .Structure, Governance & Management

Trustees: Jane English, Barry Butler (Treasurer) Midori Abraham , Alexandra Southcombe, Jae Bray (new), Non Trustee Member and Chair – Karen Butler

Under our governing document, we are required to have a minimum of three trustees.

This was to be a full year of normality and expansion of services. The Dengie D-Caf continues to remain a small, local charity that is volunteer led and run. We have no paid staff. The Chair co-ordinates the sessions and the volunteers.

We recommenced our quarterly trustee meetings with treasurer reports and we started quarterly volunteers' meetings to organise social activities and use for staff training. We were also successful in applying for a grant from our local authority, just prior to completion of last year's report and were awarded £6,000 in September 2024, so this year to enhance our services and to spend it. We used this primarily to extend our sessions to reach more people and improve our materials.

The Chair reports back on the sessions at trustee meetings and trustees continue to approve decisions outside trustee meetings, Jane English continues her role as lead trustee and Chair will seek approval or advice in-between meetings as and when necessary.

We increased the numbers of our volunteers due to our membership steadily increasing throughout the year. The Chair continues to promote the WhatsApp group for volunteers and for Members. This helps with communication and is used to remind about upcoming sessions and news and to wish people Happy Birthday when required. Carers have stated that they find the WhatsApp group a great source of support if they are struggling and for sharing advice and tips from others in a similar situation.

All our volunteers are required to have some experience of dealing with dementia in their family or friends to be able to be of support to the members. They also need approval from lead trustee before commencing

their volunteering journey. Trustees continue to approve all decisions about members, activities and anything to do with organisation of the group. Trustees review training needs and update policy documents as required, and the treasurer renews the website registration and files the annual return to the Charity Commission.

Dengie D-Caf continues to be a member of The Maldon & District Community Voluntary Services (MDCVS, which enables us to publicise our group throughout Maldon and the Dengie peninsula, to make use of their Disclosure & Barring Service for new volunteers and to keep ourselves updated about developments locally and nationally. Dengie D-Caf is part of Connect Well in the Maldon district, which both publicises the support we offer, as well as enabling us to accept referrals from other members.

The Organiser/ Chair is the main point of contact and responds to telephone calls, any enquiries and messages. As well as existing members, Dengie D-Caf is contacted by people requesting more information about dementia. They are signposted to local services as appropriate and sent information leaflets supplied by Dementia UK or the Alzheimers Society.

C. Objectives & Activities

Dengie D-Caf aims to promote a good quality of life by supporting people living with dementia, their carers, family and friends.

Dengie D-Caf dementia support group members normally meet on the 2nd Wednesday and, due to our membership expanding, we increased our sessions to include 4th Thursday of every month in a larger venue. We also decided to continue with our Steeple session on first Friday of each month as this venue is more rural and provides services to the more remote and isolated part of our area. It also has different types of facilities such as WIFI and a large indoor bowls mat, plus secure outside space, which facilitated a lovely summer picnic. Our members also felt that because our Steeple session had a smaller number of attendees, it was perfect for regular reminiscing work, which is always very well received. Activities continue to be chosen by members to ensure we meet their needs and aspirations. Also learning new skills where possible. Carers frequently say how therapeutic our craft activities are.

Our main aim for Dengie D-Caf is to provide a safe, welcoming space and to actively listen and engage with all members. Activities are chosen by the group to reflect their interests and histories and to promote living well with dementia. We provide support and information to carers as well as to those living with dementia. Carers who are sadly bereaved are also encouraged to keep attending for friendship and as support for others. Due to the increased number of volunteers, our more experienced volunteers sit with members at each session and chat about their month and actively listen to identify anyone who may be struggling.

Our regular visitors from Alzheimers society and local police help us to meet aims to offer advice and information to our members that is relevant and up to date.

Our monthly newsletters include photographs of the previous session, birthdays, local news and events, plus a monthly quiz to do in the session if time permits, or at home. They also include dementia-related features, e.g., benefit advice, health related topics and articles to maintain independence at home for carers and helpful information to increase well-being for those living at home with dementia. Our WhatsApp group helps with effective communication in between sessions as well as a support mechanism for carers.

D. Achievements & Performance

- We increased our outings especially for meals and organised one per month throughout the summer as everyone felt it was less stressful to eat in a group with volunteer support. These continued to be free as funded by our grant.
- We held our AGM in October with over 34 members attending and all members were very happy with all the work we do.
- We continued to gift flowers or hampers for milestone birthdays.
- We recruited 6 additional regular volunteers, who worked alongside the Chair and 3 of the trustees throughout the year including a bereaved carer who became a volunteer.
- Our Christmas party was a lovely buffet lunch with sandwiches being donated from our local supermarket. We had entertainment from a local line dancing group and the local choir helped with singing carols.
- After Christmas, we continued the January planning session for our members to choose their activities for the following year. Our members expressed a wish to attend a pantomime, so we organised a special dementia friendly performance with a local Amateur Dramatic group. We attended their dress rehearsal, which was very successful, and will be a regular annual outing.
- We introduced improved art and craft activities and used grant monies to stock up on supplies. These proved to be very popular with everyone, especially the carers who found them relaxing and therapeutic. We started with Christmas crafts and members made their own Christmas cards which we had printed and sold at cost. We also had 2024 calendars printed for all members with the significant dates already marked. We were lucky to still have a local art and craft tutor as a volunteer and she helped with a huge variety of art and craft related activities, such as glass painting workshops, stone and pebble painting, decorating bird boxes and a huge variety of Christmas crafts. Our new grant also gave us the opportunity to

completely restock our art and craft supplies. It has also been instrumental in increasing our outings for the next year.

- The impact of longer waiting lists for assessments with Social Care meant that carers were often left very stressed following diagnosis with a lack of support. We therefore identified the need to increase our sessions in 2024 and to include some outreach work in more isolated areas, by providing additional support for some carers who were struggling.
- We had a brand-new website designed and this includes a blog page for us to store relevant documents and policies. www.dengiedcaf.org . Our website used an existing .org address but was redesigned by a professional company. The new website includes testimonials from our members and photographs of team members and trustees. This was funded from our grant
- We organised new leaflets and have distributed these in local public places. and also designed and purchased a pull-up display information banner and started to attend local marketing and awareness events
- Due to the local need, we were able to make plans to increase sessions to 3 each month as we had been described as a lifeline for the carers. We discontinued to use United Reform Church in Burnham as our second venue as the car park was soon too small due to increased membership. We moved to St Cuthberts' Catholic church hall for 2nd Wednesday and 4th Thursday sessions and continued with Steeple village hall for the first Friday of each month. We offered a small amount of outreach work where carers were in crisis. This was well received.
- A few of our volunteers participated in a local Rotary club sponsored walk to raise funds for Dengie D Caf
- A local dementia-themed charity called SEAN folded and they donated their balance of just over £1200 to us.
- We were lucky to have continued funding from Maldon CVS for a local cinema to provide a Bi Monthly relaxed Dementia Friendly film showings, which included the wider community, including 3 residential care homes, a day centre and the wider community. This was free and if the cinema didn't have a suitable film, we agreed to provide a suitable DVD to show. This was hugely popular with approximate 40 plus people attending, with their carers.
- Our sessions are well supported by relevant services. We are lucky to have monthly support from 2 local Alzheimers volunteers as well as our local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) and Council Engagement officer. The local PCSO has been invaluable giving advice and support on sensitive issues on driving and other legal issues. As a result of these visits, we redesigned our membership form to reflect questions such as 'have you advised DVLA of your diagnosis'. We have also had informative visits from local Citizens Advice centre who gave advice on completion of Blue Badges and Attendance Allowance forms. We also had visits from a local ex-police dog handler with their retired 3-legged dog, a local garden

centre who helped members plant up pots with flowers and vegetables, we participated in a local Slipper Swap campaign, a brilliant initiative to reduce falls in the home provided by Maldon Community Volunteer Service (CVS). We also had 2 NHS clinical personnel attend a session to carry out our basic health checks. We are requesting that this will be a regular event.

- We asked our volunteers to complete Dementia Friends training either online or face to face. This was found to be very helpful.
- Outings proved very popular and we visited a local vineyard twice who provided a ploughman's lunch, plus we participated in the Local Burnham Art trail by accepting an invitation to a local artist's home for a cream tea, and one of our members held a garden party which was thoroughly enjoyed by all.
- Our membership increased steadily throughout the year and as at September 2024, we had 20 members living with dementia and 21 carers attending. Plus 2 bereaved carers. Sadly 3 people passed away and 1 moved into a Residential care home.
- Our age group ranged from 60 to 99, although most were in their 70s and 80s. As well as dementia, some had Parkinson's disease, arthritis and diabetes.
- Burnham Town Council continued to support us by printing our monthly newsletter and any other printing we needed. We do regularly provide copying paper.
- Towards the end of that year, we were given a donation of £4,000 by Provide, who nominated us to receive money from their funds. Provide supply the NHS community-based services on behalf of the NHS.

E. Financial Review

- **Sources of funding**
We started the financial year on 1st October 2023 with an **opening balance of £10,656.26**, being made up of £10,604.80 in the bank and £51.46 the petty cash.
- **A total of £11,732.64 in donations and grants were received:** including £4,000 donation from Provide, £1,246 from SEAN, £651 from quiz nights, £606 in sponsored walks, £400 from Burnham & Dengie Rotary club, and £350 from the Burnham Carnival Committee
- **Total expenditure for the year was £7,495.04**, made up of £7,216.84 via bank and £278.20 from petty cash.
- **Closing balance was £15,134.86** of which £15,120.60 in bank and £14.26 in petty cash.

Our main expenditure this year has been for outings, Hall Rent and stocking up on supplies for a large range of art and crafts activities.

Our reserves policy for the next financial year will be to continue to hold £1,500 to cover one year's insurance and basic running costs.

F. Declaration

Overall, it has been another very productive and successful year for Dengie D-Caf. Feedback from our members and our trustees evidence clearly that they are very satisfied that in this time we have managed to retain the free service with a full programme with outings whilst still taking care to safeguard our vulnerable members.

The trustees declare that they have approved the report above.

Signed Karen Butler
ordinator

Full name: Karen Butler Position: Chair /co-

Signed Jane English

Full Name Jane English, Lead Trustee.

Date: 30 june 2025