



## **Summary for AGM March 2012                    'One Year On'**

The Forget-Me-Nots have been up and running for a whole year! Our first cognitive stimulation therapy group was held at Doughtys in February 2011; of course the planning behind that initial course of 10 weekly sessions began several months earlier when a small group of people interested in outreach work got together. Their shared interest was to help people with memory difficulties and their partners-in-care to participate in group activities designed to stimulate a person cognitively. The Forget-Me-Nots are comprised of people from within the Octagon Chapel community and others with a particular interest in this type of voluntary work. We follow a nationally accepted and well researched format for each course of sessions always welcoming in family and formal paid carers to join us.

We chose the name 'Forget-Me-Nots', leaflets are in the chapel and show 5 founder members. One year on, we have grown in numbers and now need to seriously consider our own training needs. In 2011 we were busy gathering practical experience and getting to know each other's strengths and those areas that needed support and further practise. We are now clear about what we can offer; we are good at working with groups of 5 to 8 people with memory difficulties and their partners-in-care to create a fun interactive group session. Our work aims to be 'failure-free' and enjoyable for everyone. We like to hold consecutive meetings over a course of sessions for the same people on the same day and at the same time.

We learnt much from running our first group at Doughtys and then held three shorter courses in the Martineau Hall for people in our local community. Our groups work best with a high proportion of volunteers or helpers, and we know that this makes our work unique. All volunteers give their time, travel and expenses freely. Practically we need a warm, well-lit and comfortable room with good acoustics, and financially we spend an average of £7.50 per session aside bills for heating and light. We do ask for contributions from participants, although ultimately we prefer to leave this matter to each person or their partner-in care. Outlay covers basic refreshments, some training material and equipment. We often send one person in each group away with a bunch of flowers. Flowers have proved to be a wonderful way of cementing positive associations with the group.

2011 was a very full and successful year of some 25 group sessions in total. In the year ahead we aim to connect with other care organisations. To support this type of work the volunteers need to invest time and energy in core training. We have now completed two training sessions. The first was a half-day workshop about therapeutic touch in January led by a Norwich-based Reflexologist. In February we had a full-day workshop on cognitive stimulation therapy (CST) led by a local Psychologist working on behalf of the team at UCL which developed this approach. Financially we will incur costs to pay for these trainings and so of course we will need to fund raise throughout 2012! The Forget-Me-Nots have a separate account within the main Octagon account and recently benefitted from £100.00 from the Elden Trust.

## **Recent Work**

- The Autumn course finished in December 2011: in this group we welcomed in Tatjana Tomljanovic as a new FMN - Tatjana has a social work background and we are delighted that she has joined us. Also Rosemary, Val and Sarah from the congregation.
- On December 9th we opened the Martineau Hall for a film show of the film 'Remember Me'. 18 people came for film and discussion. The aim of the film is to raise awareness about dementia and generate discussion about living with dementia.
- Friday 16th Dec the FMNs and Doughtys gave a staged reading of a play 'Home from Home' written by Peggie Cannam, a supporter of our work – a wonderful memorable event!
- February 2012 started with the news that 2 bids to local grants (Norfolk Community Fund & Norfolk-Suffolk Dementia Alliance) had been unsuccessful. Thanks to all involved in this process. The applications have been formative for the FMNs and members of the Chapel committee. We asked the funds for support to upgrade the parlour MH, and for help with equipment and training for the FMNs. We may not have received any money as yet but have learnt a lot in the process!

## **Groups for 2012**

In February we start a new drop-in 'poetry, painting, singing and fun' group in the Martineau Hall. This group will be held weekly finishing at the end of April. We hope to attract new supporters of our work and also see familiar faces from previous groups.

We have three organisations keen to work with the Forget-Me-Nots in 2012; NORSE care homes (formerly Norfolk County Council), Doughtys and Norwich Prison, Elderly Lifers Service.

Each of these services was able to send members of the care team to the CST training day in February, this type of organisational commitment helps to support the introduction of new ways of working within care practice.

## **Organisation of the Forget-Me-Nots**

We are committed to ensuring that the Forget-Me-Nots are responsibly organised given the sensitive nature of this type of work; in March Sally Pinney and I will attend a full day course on the management of volunteers to be held by Voluntary Norfolk.

We also would like to ensure that the Octagon Chapel community knows about our work so will provide regular updates in the Norfolk Unitarian newsletter.

## **Participating in national research**

In January we were invited to join a national research study by University College London on the use of CST called SHIELD (Support at Home: Interventions to Enhance Life in Dementia). The study is interested in the effectiveness of staff training and its implementation in the workplace. We are extremely pleased to be taking part, and through a randomised process have just learnt that we will receive outreach support from the team at UCL over the next 12 months. JFarmer 13.02.12