

# Real News

Issue 101

# 25<sup>th</sup>

ANNIVERSARY

## 25 Exceptional Years

Celebrating 25 Years of Making a Real Difference

New Learn My  
Way Online  
Platform

Congratulations  
to our 3rd Sector  
Award Finalists

Real **Life** Options  
*a real choice | a real voice | a real difference*

# Welcome

**Welcome to Issue 101 of Real News.** Our regular magazine is your opportunity to contribute and find out more about what is going on at Real Life Options and 1st Homecare.

This special 25th Anniversary issue celebrates our long heritage as a leading provider of care and support and reflects on the past 25 exceptional years. This issue also includes coverage from the 3rd Sector Care Awards at which our Darlington Road team were finalists for the Compassion Award. You can also read about the exciting new Learn My Way online learning platform and discover how the Real Life Options team has been inspiring the next generation to take up a career in social care.

As always, please do let me know your wonderful stories for future issues. Plus, if you're a person we support who would like to get involved in Real News I'd love to hear from you - so please do get in touch!

I hope you enjoy your read.

Sam Goodwin, Editor



## In this Issue

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 2. 3rd Sector Care Awards Finalists         | 16. Kevin's Big Birthday Bash                       |
| 3. 25 Exceptional Years                     | 16. Surprise! Happy Birthday (Courtney)             |
| 6. Our Story (the first 25 Years)           | 17. All Aboard for Autism (Tyren's Sponsored Walk)  |
| 7. Annual Review Launch                     | 18. Rain or Shine (Hawick BBQ)                      |
| 8. Our Hall of Fame                         | 18. Over 3 Decades of Support (Jackie's retirement) |
| 9. New EasyRead Speed Challenge             | 19. Light Years Ahead (Catriona Science Centre)     |
| 10. Learn My Way (Online Learning Platform) | 20. Slimming World Star (Maureen)                   |
| 11. Time To Get Spooky                      | 20. We Need You (Your Chance to Get Involved)       |
| 12. New Computer for An Carina Day Centre   | 21. Welcome to our New Starters                     |
| 12. SSSC Registration                       | 22. Marketing and Business Development Internship   |
| 13. Close Shave for Cancer Research         | 23. The Most Wonderful Time of the Year             |
| 13. Employee Assistance Programme           | 25. Nice To Meet You                                |
| 14. Inspiring the Next Generation           | 26. Real Life Entertainment                         |
| 15. The Big Interview (Lisa Lenton, ARC)    | 27. Competition Time                                |

## Stay up to date

.....  
Keep up with all the latest news on Facebook, Twitter and our website.

- /RealLifeOptions
- @RealLifeOptions
- www.reallifeoptions.org

## Got news? Get in touch!

- .....
- samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org
  - 01977 781385



# We are 3rd Sector Care Awards Finalists

## Darlington Road Team are shortlisted for the prestigious Compassion Award

Huge congratulations to our Darlington Road team who were recently announced as finalists for the prestigious Compassion Award at the 3rd Sector Care Awards.

Headed up by Service Manager Lisa Livingstone, a number of Real Life Options representatives attended the Central London Awards ceremony in December. Hosted by Dame Esther Rantzen, the Awards showcase the innovation and care excellence of the not-for-profit care and support sector. The fantastic afternoon saw more than 250 people come together to celebrate and enjoy live music from The Beathovens, the only band in the UK whose members are all on the autism spectrum and are living in full time care.



The Darlington Road staff team were runner up in last year's Real Hero Awards and were nominated for the Compassion Award due to their exceptional work in embracing new systems of working and actively improving the service, whilst supporting a new manager. The staff proactively organised a raffle, which raised enough money to introduce a multi-sensory room and have also initiated informal coffee and cake chat days to better connect with families.

*"The fact we were at a major awards ceremony as finalists is a fantastic achievement and really reflects all the hard work everyone has been putting in."*

Lisa was joined at the awards ceremony by support staff Rebecca Almond, Anthony Harkin, Jacqui Pitt, Diane Rudd, Rob Royds and Julie Williamson, as well as Chief Executive David Sargent, Executive Director Vivien Simon and Area Manager Tracy Connelly.

Lisa Livingstone said, "It is a privilege and honour managing such an amazing team who go over and above their job role to ensure that the people we support are at the centre of everything we do."

"I'm so proud of the team," added Tracy Connelly. "Just the fact we were at a major awards ceremony as finalists is a fantastic achievement and really reflects all the hard work everyone has been putting in all year round."



# 25 Exceptional Years

Celebrating 25 Years of Making a Real Difference

2017 was a very important year for the Real Life Options Group as it marked our 25th anniversary since being founded on 23rd March 1992. We are really proud of how successful the Real Life Options Group has become since our humble beginnings being organised from the home conservatory of our founder David Wandless. Today the Group has grown into a national organisation, providing support for 1,486 people and employing 1,854 staff.



"This is a really exciting time for the Real Life Options Group. Our long term vision is to continue to build upon what we are already doing well and push the boundaries of innovation in how people are supported to best achieve their potential."

citizens, to maximise their independence and social inclusion and to exercise choice about their own lives.

Chief Executive David Sargent said, "This is a really exciting time for the Real Life Options Group. It has taken a long time to build the national presence of the organisation to what it is today and it's great that 25 years on our approach is still very much focused on the importance of delivering excellent person-centred services to put people in control of their own lives. Our long term vision for the Group is to continue to build upon what we are already doing well and push the boundaries of innovation in how people are supported to best achieve their potential."

As one of the leading care and support providers in the UK, the Real Life Options Group has an excellent reputation for providing person-centred care and services to support people to live their lives the way they want to. Working closely with over 40 different local authorities in England and Scotland, we are known for providing self-directed support to ensure people have equal rights as

## Congratulations Carol

Huge congratulations to **Carol from Stockton** on Tees, who fought off tough competition to win our UK-wide competition to design our 25th anniversary card (supported by Joy Sudron).



## The people we support and our staff share what they really think about the Real Life Options Group...

"**Good and nice people to help.** My favourite memory is helping out doing the interviews for new staff."

**Gary, a person we support**

"I find it refreshing that Real Life Options still hold onto the values that were so prevalent in social care when I began my career: **the needs of the people we support are always at the centre.**"

**Jacqueline, staff member**

"We know we can always approach our Service Manager and she will make time to help and listen to us. **Staff work well both individually and as part of a team** because we are confident in our manager's leadership. This means that we can offer a high level of support to all the people at our service. **I love my job!**"

**Mary, staff member**

"**I like my staff because they make me happy.** I like going on days out, doing my activities, cooking, doing my housework and getting a hand and foot massage."

**Catriona, a person we support**

"I like working with different staff who help me keep my house tidy and support me to go out for lunch and general outings, shopping for new clothes and getting my nails done."

**Yvonne, a person we support**

"What I like most about Real Life Options is how **friendly, caring and welcoming** everyone is, both the people we support and staff members. It is clear a standard has been set from the Service Managers and this is reflecting on everyone which makes it **a really nice company to work for** and makes every day enjoyable."

**Rebecca, staff member**

"I like that Real Life Options **seeks to make life safer and richer for the people we support** and that the organisation constantly strives to find improved ways to do this."

**Ruth, staff member**

"**I like that I get choices of what I can do** and taking part in the interviews for new staff. I like the staff who are all good Support Workers and I like being supported with cooking."

**Mark, a person we support**

"I like how my staff have known me for a long time and **know how I like to be supported.** I like to be encouraged to live independently by doing dishes, washing clothes, cleaning and using my PC."

**Fay, a person we support**

"I like and really value my team and the way **we all pull together to support each other** to do a really great job."

**Alice, staff member**

"**I like my staff who listen** and have a good sense of humour."

**Robert, a person we support**

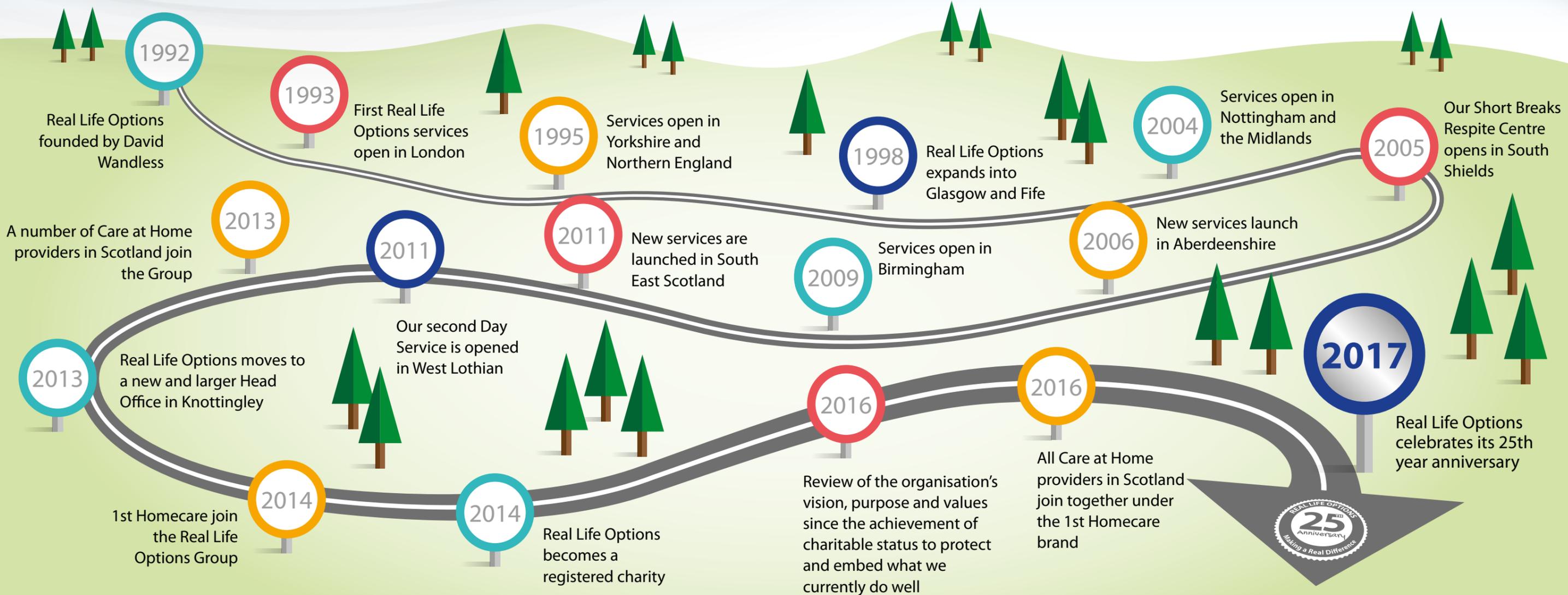
"I like my staff who **support me to live in my house.**"

**Tommy, a person we support**

# Our Story

**141** TOTAL LOCATIONS

**1,486** TOTAL PEOPLE SUPPORTED



**OVER TWO THIRDS**

of staff would recommend the Real Life Options Group as a good place to work

**89%**

of staff feel that the work they do gives them a feeling of personal achievement

The Real Life Options Group delivers **54,386** hours of care each week



**92% OF STAFF**

agree they have a good understanding of the Real Life Options Group values

# Annual Review Launch

The Real Life Options Group Annual Review 2016-17 is now available

The Real Life Options Group Annual Review for the financial year 2016-17 is now available. The Review celebrates some of the great highlights from the past 12 months as well as casting a further look back over the 25 years since the organisation began.

Chief Executive David Sargent presented the Real Hero National Award Winners, Graeme Masson and Andrea Halliday, with their prizes and shared their outstanding stories to inspire the crowd. He also announced the very first winners of the newly launched Special Achievement Awards; Graham from Angus who recently won silver and bronze medals in cycling at the Special Olympics National Games and Steph from Leeds for a number of achievements including speaking at a conference and winning a dance competition.

Graham and Steph joined David Sargent and David Wilkin to cut the 25th Anniversary cake so everyone could tuck in and celebrate the last quarter of a century, whilst looking forward to what the future holds.

"Huge congratulations to our very first Special Achievement Award winners; Graham and Steph, who are both an inspiration to us all."

Oulton Hall in Leeds served as the venue for the launch of the Annual Review, which was attended by key suppliers, stakeholders and senior members of staff.



Graham and Steph with CEO David and Chairman David

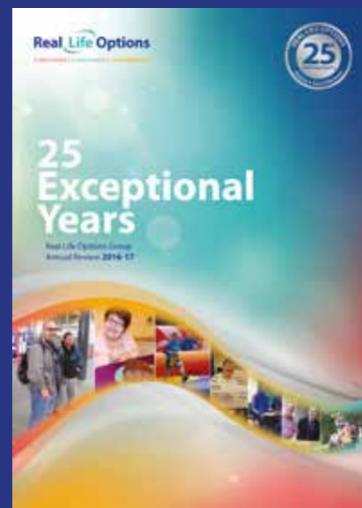


Andrea and Graeme with CEO David

## Get your copy of our Annual Review 16-17

You can request a hard copy of our latest Annual Review from our Marketing and Communications Manager Sam Goodwin by emailing [samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org](mailto:samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org) or phoning 01977 781385.

Alternatively you can also read the Annual Review on our website [www.reallifeoptions.org](http://www.reallifeoptions.org)



# Our Hall of Fame

**Congratulations to our longest serving members of staff:**

-  **Jenny Johnson**, Recruitment Project Officer (25 years, 2 months)
-  **Val Payne**, Recruitment Project Officer (22 years 11 months)
-  **Catherine Skidmore**, Continuous Improvement Partner (22 years 9 months)
-  **Tim Oxley**, Support Worker from Leeds (22 years and 5 months)
-  **Malin Burke**, Service Manager, (22 years, 3 months)
-  **Michelle Martin**, Support Worker from Balmore (18 years and 11 months)

**Well done to our very first winners of the Special Achievement Award:**

-  **Graham from Angus** for winning silver and bronze medals in cycling at the Special Olympics National Games.
-  **Steph from Leeds** for a number of achievements including speaking at a conference and winning a dance competition.



Steph and Graham

# New EasyRead Speed Challenge

**New EasyRead Magnetic Game available for use at events**

The 'not-so-easy' EasyRead Magnetic Game is officially available for use at a variety of events, including recruitment days and conferences.

The competitive speed challenge is designed for two people to race against the clock to match 10 EasyRead pictures to 10 EasyRead statements. As well as being fun, the interactive game is informative about what the people we support can achieve and what a rewarding job being a Support Worker can be.

Steph, one of the people we support from Leeds is the inspiration behind the game and worked closely with the Marketing Manager to help bring

it to life. She was thrilled to see the finished game in all its glory at the Annual Review Launch Event and proved to be the quickest on the day at playing it too!

To request the EasyRead Magnetic Game for use at a future event, please contact our Marketing Manager Sam Goodwin by emailing [samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org](mailto:samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org) or phoning 01977 781385.



Steph and the game

# HELPING YOU GET ONLINE



Introducing our new and exciting online learning platform, available to both the people we support and our staff members

Here at the Real Life Options Group it is important to us that all the people we support and our staff are given the opportunity to feel both confident and safe online. We are therefore thrilled to be launching Learn My Way; an exciting new online learning platform, which is available to access at any time.

Real Life Options is now an official partner of the Online Centres Network who provide Learn My Way and the wide range of free learning materials available have been specially designed by The Good Things Foundation to support people with little or no computer skills to become digitally inclusive.

*"Exploring the modules available will help you grow in independence and confidence in everyday life."*

Learn My Way consists of over 30 different easy-to-learn modules, which take around half an hour each to complete. The modules cover all the basics for all levels, from switching on your computer and using a mouse and keyboard, to online safety, improving your health online and accessing public services.

The modules also cover useful online practices such as managing your money, navigating social media and using Universal Jobmatch to search for work. The modules are entirely free and you will receive an official certificate for each module completed.

With the Internet at your fingertips you could research your family history, subscribe to healthy eating channels and stay in touch with distant friends and family.

"You can access Learn My Way on your computer, tablet or smartphone and explore the modules available which will help you grow in independence and confidence in everyday life," said Anthea Sully, Head of Business Development and Communications.

Your manager will be briefed more about Learn My Way in the coming months and will be able to provide more information about how to get started at [www.learnmyway.com](http://www.learnmyway.com)



**Guest Writer: Robyn Taylor McEwan,**  
Marketing and Business Development Intern



# LEARN MY WAY

## Module Highlight: Shopping Online

The **Shopping Online** course module shows you tips and benefits for buying online, including how to compare products and prices to find some real bargains! It also means you can shop anytime, day or night, whenever it suits you.

You can buy a train ticket, do your weekly food shop or buy clothes, and have it all delivered straight to your door.

This module shows you:

- ✓ the benefits and basics of **shopping online**
- ✓ how to **browse for items online** and add them to your basket
- ✓ how to use a **product search** to find the products you want
- ✓ ways of **organising delivery** for your online shopping
- ✓ how to find great deals using **price comparison websites**
- ✓ how to do **online payments**
- ✓ how to **return products** bought online
- ✓ how companies may use your **personal information**



# Happy Shopping!



# TIME TO GET SPOOKY

Gruesome ghouls and wicked witches invade Real Life Options for a haunted Halloween extravaganza



This October things got a bit spooky at Real Life Options as we hosted a **UK-wide Halloween Fancy Dress Costume and Crafts Competition**. We received many fabulous and creative entries, so thank you to everyone who took part.

A huge congratulations to **Janet from Hartlepool** who won first place with her freaky fancy dress costume as a scary prisoner! Congratulations also to the **Darlington Road Team** who came out top with their spectacularly creepy crafts.

## FREAKIEST FANCY DRESS COSTUME WINNERS:

- 1st Place: Janet from Hartlepool
- 2nd Place: Lawrence from London
- 3rd Place: Stephen from Hartlepool



## CREEPIEST CRAFTS WINNERS:

- 1st Place: Darlington Road Team; Carol, June, Liam, Jamie, Peter, Nina and John
- 2nd Place: Sheila from Newcastle
- Joint 3rd Place: Mark from Leeds
- Joint 3rd Place: An Carina Team; Mark, Sam Danii, Gary, Maggie
- Joint 3rd Place: Darlington Road Team; Carol, June, Liam, Jamie, Peter, Nina and John



Guest Writer: Robyn Taylor McEwan, Marketing and Business Development Intern

# New Computer for An Carina

Keeping technology at Real Life Options modern and up to date

Our Head of IT, Paul Cusworth, is always on the lookout to keep Real Life Options current and modern when it comes to IT.

Last year, Paul visited one of our services, An Carina Day Centre, and noticed that it was home to a very old computer, used by the people we support. Martin McInrue, An Carina's Service Manager, spoke to Paul about a young person who had just joined the service and enjoyed using computers and simple online games. Despite the history of the computer as an antique and an important artefact at An Carina, it was time for an upgrade!

As luck would have it, Paul's visit coincided with the receipt of £350 sponsorship money, fundraised by former ITPS colleague Anthony Kay and his friend Michael Jeans for their exhilarating charity skydive for Real Life Options.



Gary supported by staff team member Liam Lynch.

Out with the old and in with the new - it was agreed that Paul would provide a new PC and monitor with the funds raised, which is now all set up and ready to use at the day centre.

Guest Writer: Robyn Taylor McEwan, Marketing and Business Development Intern

# Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)

Service Managers begin rolling programme to aid SSSC registration



Remember that all Scottish staff (Housing Support Services or Care at Home Services) will be **legally required to be registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) by 18th October 2019**.

Although registration officially began in October 2017, the Real Life Options Group has also launched a rolling programme for every service. Our aim is to ensure we support all staff to register, ensure every service is fully compliant on a planned basis and that no one gets left behind.

Local managers will notify staff when to apply and they are responsible for completing all of the relevant documentation.

Registration means all staff are required to adhere to the SSSC codes of conduct and means the people of Scotland can count on social services being provided by a trusted, skilled and confident workforce.

# Close Shave for Cancer Research

Here at the Real Life Options Group we are always proud and grateful for the commitment and dedication of our brilliant employees. Alison Williamson, 1st Homecare Support Worker from Lockerbie recently went above and beyond last year by braving a charity head shaving to raise £301 in aid of Cancer Research.

Alison's experience of her mother surviving cancer twice and her friend recently passing away from the disease inspired her to take action. All of Alison's colleagues agree she has shown outstanding commitment and selflessness and would like to say a huge well done and congratulations on being an outstanding role model to us all.

Alison's barber, Gary Lewis, commented, "As a business, I always support charity fundraisers and I'm more than happy to help and give where I can and what greater cause than to stand up to the fight against cancer."



**Guest Writer: Robyn Taylor McEwan,**  
Marketing and Business Development Intern

## Employee Assistance Programme

Confidential services designed to support staff when they need a helping hand

The Real Life Options Group is proud to launch the new Employee Assistance Programme – your Employee Wellbeing Service, provided by external company Optum.

This new service enables all staff (and their families) to talk to a range of experts on everything from managing money and staying healthy to family crises and buying a new home. This includes access to face-to-face counselling and there's also online support with a whole host of information and resources designed to assist with the challenges of daily life.

Services include:

- Face-to-face and telephone counselling
- Medical helpline
- Debt, financial and legal information
- General citizens information
- Support for managers

To access the Employee Assistance Programme, which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, employees simply call **0800 282 193** and quote our company name. To access the online service, they should visit [www.livewell.optum.com](http://www.livewell.optum.com) and input the company's access code which is **RealLife**.

## Inspiring the Next Generation

Real Life Options staff promote social care at a number of events across UK

Support work is regarded as a rewarding and diverse job role, yet many young people are disillusioned or simply unaware about what social care work has to offer. This year the Real Life Options team has been travelling around, spreading the word about the fantastic job opportunities this sector offers.



The highly interactive and practical Tees Valley Skills Event at Teesside University attracted over 2,000 young people aged 14-19 from the local area to learn more about employment and learning prospects. Real Life Options Service Managers Leigh McCusker and Lisa Livingstone had a brilliant time talking to young people about support work, engaging them with the importance of social care and celebrating care work as both important and fulfilling.

Meanwhile in Wakefield, Service Manager Karen Tebbutt and Team Coordinator Joanne Stringer met with commissioners, social workers, partner agencies and service users at the annual My Life Services Framework Provider Event.

**Guest Writer: Robyn Taylor McEwan,**  
Marketing and Business Development Intern



### It's Safe to Speak Out!

# 0800 032 7333

Your Confidential Whistle Blowing Hotline is a safe way for you to report any examples of poor practice or misconduct.



# THE BIG INTERVIEW

## Real News talks to **Lisa Lenton, England Director for Association for Real Change (ARC)**

### What is your job title and where do you work?

I am the England Director for ARC, which is a membership organisation for service providers for people with learning disabilities and autism. We are a UK-wide organisation and I am responsible for our work in England. We support our members in various ways by linking them up to share ideas, offering training on a range of topics to help upskill their workforce and representing them when talking to the Government about key issues.

### What are your hobbies/interests?

I love listening to music and going to gigs (hoping to get to V Festival again next year). I also enjoy watching football (Liverpool are my team but please don't judge me!) Most importantly I love spending time with my family and friends, they are the best.

### If you had to take one book and one piece of music to a desert island what would you take?

Well, I'm a practical sort so it would be 'How to survive on a desert island' - I would have thought Bear Grylls might have written one by now (sorry if that's a bit of a cop out). As for music, I have really eclectic taste but something easy listening like Ed Sheeran, George Michael or Oasis.

### What's the best advice you've ever been given?

To answer this I need to think about the advice I give others really; 'only look back in the mirror to see how far you have come' would be one, as well as 'don't worry about the things you cannot control, focus on what you can do, not what you can't change'.

### Who's your role model and why?

That would most certainly be my grandmother, Mabel. She had the strongest will, the biggest personality, cheekiest sense of humour and warmest heart. If she wanted to achieve something she worked her socks off to achieve it.

### What have you tried?

On a personal level, I tried living overseas and travelled around the world, experiencing different

cultures and environments. Professionally, I have connected with our members, building a sense of belonging within the ARC community more than ever before. Social care is both a challenging and rewarding sector to be in and collaboration is key.

### What have you learnt?

In terms of the sector, I've learned that working together and having a united voice delivers better results and outcomes for us all.

### What are you pleased about?

We have just successfully finished hosting our annual conference 'Back to the 80's; Forward to the future' to celebrate the 35th anniversary of ARC's work in England. It was great to have a mix of engaging presenters and see so many of our members in person once again.

### What are you concerned about?

That the social care sector, the staff and its users, aren't as well recognised as they should be. Saying that, I truly believe the profile of social care is steadily increasing. I think all staff in social care should be very proud and encourage others to join the sector. There are so many career opportunities out there and the intrinsic value of working with people with disabilities is something that workers in other sectors rarely get to feel.

### What will your next steps be?

I've just moved house, so at home, the next step is to be all unpacked before Christmas! At work, I want to continue to ensure that ARC offers practical help and support to ensure the standard of support available to people with learning disabilities and autism gets better and better. We will continue to offer opportunities for development, to bring people together, communicate and listen as effectively as we can.



Lisa Lenton, ARC

# Kevin's Big Birthday Bash

## Celebrating a special 75 years in style

75 years young and surrounded by friends and family, Kevin from London celebrated a very special birthday last summer.

Terry Williams, Area Administrator described the afternoon as "warm and sunny" as Kevin's family and friends came together to enjoy great music, food, chatter and dancing. Lots of the people we support who attended love to dance so there were some great moves on display.

Terry said a particular highlight for everyone was seeing Kevin's birthday cake being brought out and put in front of him with all the lit candles.



Kevin, family and friends enjoyed an indulgent banquet of curry, chicken, couscous, salads and garlic bread - all topped off with a delicious array of desserts. Terry added, "We had a great DJ who played records from the 50's and 60's, which is obviously Kevin's era and which he really loves and will sing along to."

**Guest Writer: Robyn Taylor McEwan,**  
Marketing and Business Development Intern



# Surprise! Happy Birthday

Happy birthday to Courtney from Oxford, who enjoyed a very special surprise birthday party last year. Having recently moved into the newly opened supported living service in Oxford, Courtney's party marked the first big celebration since the launch and it provided a great opportunity to bring everyone together.

"Courtney's birthday party was perfect," said Asha Maina, Team Coordinator. "We coined it the 'First Birthday' of the new service and it was really important to us to celebrate in style. It was brilliant, we managed to keep it a secret too so it really was a surprise and Courtney was thrilled. The highlight for me was seeing everyone come together from their different flats, sharing food and dancing together, which created a lovely atmosphere. Great friendships were formed that day and have been maintained since."



# All Aboard for Autism

## Tyren raises over £115 in Thomas & Friends themed sponsored walk

Tyren from Leeds had a great time at the National Autistic Society 5K Sponsored Walk at Drayton Manor Theme Park in Tamworth. He was supported by Nina and Mickie who are both Support Workers and have a great relationship with Tyren.

They all stayed over at the Drayton Manor hotel the night before due to the early start and Tyren loved the Thomas the Tank Engine themed room, which is one of his keen interests.

*"This sponsored walk was a great achievement for Tyren and I am over the moon that he completed the full 5K."*

Prior to the event Tyren collected sponsorship money from a number of the Leeds Services and Head Office, in order to raise the grand total of £115.50 which was donated to the National Autistic Society. Tyren, Nina and Mickie all had a fantastic time and enjoyed every second of the experience.

Lindsey Bird, Team Coordinator said, "As soon as I found out about this sponsored walk I knew it would be something Tyren would be interested in. I passed it on to his support staff who within no time at all had made arrangements for him to take part. With the great support from everyone involved Tyren had a wonderful day and from the look on his face when he returned home he got a great sense of achievement by taking part in the event."

"Well done Tyren!" added Malin Burke, Service Manager. "This sponsored walk was a great achievement for Tyren and I am over the moon that he completed the full 5K. The support from everyone was outstanding and I would like to thank everyone who made this event so memorable for him."



# Rain or Shine



## Rain, rain go away...

It was a great turn out the barbeque at our Hawick service last year as people we support, family members and staff came together in celebration of their recent Real Heroes Award triumph. The staff team were last year's Runner Up in their area due to consistently delivering an exceptional level of care and support culminating in achieving the best grade possible '6 Excellent' in their recent Care Inspectorate report.

Despite the weather forcing the Hawick team to abandon the original outdoor plans, the rain failed to put a dampener on the celebrations and the party continued indoors. Everyone had a spectacular time enjoying the music, disco lights, tasty food and dancing. Service Manager, Lynn Jack said, "It was very well attended, and everyone had a brilliant night!"



**Guest Writer: Robyn Taylor McEwan,**  
Marketing and Business Development Intern

# Over 3 Decades of Support

## Long-standing Support Worker Jackie retires after over 30 years

The Real Life Options Group recently bid a fond farewell to one of our longest-standing Support Workers Jackie Corrigan who retired at the end of 2017.

30 years. She relocated with a group of ladies when they moved out into the community in Birmingham in 2001 and their support was taken over by Real Life Options.

Having originally started work at Monyhull Hospital when she was just 17 years old in 1985, Jackie has worked closely with a number of the people we support for over

"Jackie is definitely one of a kind and they broke the mould when they made her," said Danielle Palmer, Team Coordinator. "She has a heart of gold, is such good fun and will do anything for anybody. Her quirky personality and zest for life will be missed by the people we support and staff alike. Her kind nature and bubbly personality has been a welcome addition to our team over the years and we wish her the very best in her retirement."



# Light Years Ahead

## Catriona explores her musical skills at Glasgow Science Centre

When Catriona from Glasgow was recently sitting with staff planning her day trip activities for the following Saturday, she expressed an interest in visiting the Glasgow Science Centre. Naturally staff supported Catriona to achieve this and organised a fun-filled day.

The purpose-built Glasgow Science Centre is one of Scotland's most popular visitor attractions and is host to a wide range of mind-blowing exhibitions and entertaining shows.

*"Catriona especially loved the interactive musical harp which was definitely a highlight of the day."*

Callum Blair, Team Coordinator said, "Catriona showed a real interest in all the different activities within the Science Centre and really enjoyed the trip. She especially loved the interactive musical harp which was definitely a highlight of the day."

Catriona added, "I will definitely go back."



# Slimming World Star

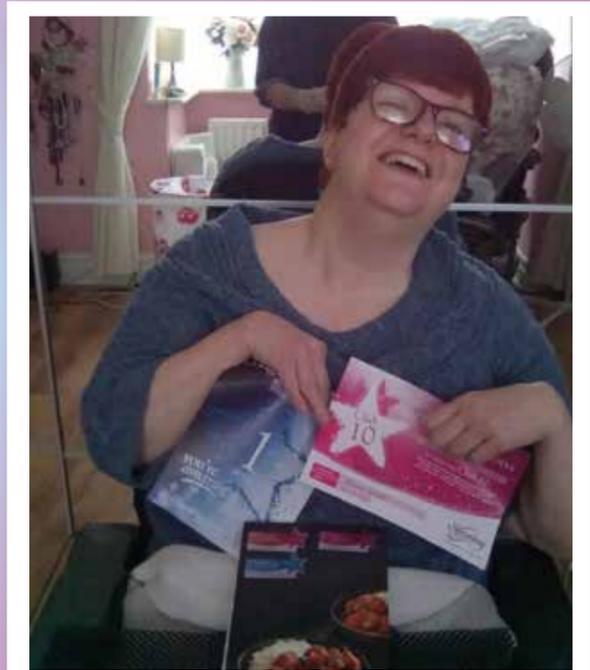
## Maureen achieves her 1 Stone Award

Maureen from Newcastle has been making great progress at her local slimming club as she works hard to embrace a healthier lifestyle.

*"With the help of my staff, I'm on my way to reaching my goal."*

Maureen said, "I wanted to share with everyone from Real Life Options how well I'm doing at Slimming World. In November I lost another 5lb and achieved my 1 Stone Award as well as my Club10 Award. With the help of my staff, I'm on my way to reaching my goal."

Congratulations Maureen! Keep up the great work.



# We Need You!

## Would you like to contribute to future issues of Real News?

Here at Real News we love to report on all your wonderful stories and **we'd be thrilled if you would like to contribute to future issues of Real News.**

So if this is you, or you know someone else who would be interested, **please contact the editor Sam Goodwin on 01977 781385 or email [samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org](mailto:samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org)**

**If you're a person we support who would like to get involved we'd love to hear from you.** Whether it's sharing your artwork, photographs and recipes or writing poetry, film reviews, gardening tips or even writing your own article, nothing is too small! We'd love to see more contributions from people we support across the UK to find out what you have been up to in your city – **all ideas are welcome.**



# Welcome to our New Starters

Congratulations to the newest recruits who have joined Real Life Options over the past six months. Welcome to the team!



## Derbyshire Induction

- Sam Cadman
- Chikondi Chisasa
- John Deeley
- Irene Tembo
- Sarah Wild
- Esther Willis

## Glasgow Induction

- Hagos Abraham
- Benjamin Adeoye
- Robbie Anderson
- Helen Boyle
- Wilma Dean
- Liam Gangel
- James Haldone
- Isobel Llopis
- Courtney Martin
- Sharon O'Neil
- Nicole Russell



## Glasgow Induction

- Samantha Baillie
- Maria Bonner
- Euan Carroll
- Jodie Deakin
- Steven McKee
- Jamie Uchima



# Launch of the Marketing and Business Development Internship

The Real Life Options Group is thrilled to have recently launched the Marketing and Business Development Internship programme. During the 3 month scheme, interns will gain valuable experience of marketing, business development and communications in the social care and charity sector and will have the opportunity to work on real projects with genuine responsibility.

Our recent intern, Robyn Taylor McEwan, recently graduated from Newcastle University with an English Literature degree and hopes to work in

marketing for a charity. She has contributed a number of great articles to this Real News magazine, and you'll see other interns' names popping up as guest writers in the near future.

**Marketing & Business Development Internship**

*"I have found the work incredibly rewarding and feel recognised by my managers, co-workers and the people we support."*



Marketing Manager Sam and Intern Robyn

Robyn said, "I've found the internship an extremely positive experience, I'd definitely recommend it! What I've liked most about working at Real Life Options is the value I feel in response to the work I've put in. I have found the work incredibly rewarding and feel recognised by my managers, co-workers and the people we support, who've all responded brilliantly to my new position and have appreciated all the contributions that I've made."

## Go Real Digital...

Real Life Options are always on the lookout for how we can operate more efficiently as an organisation. That includes being as **environmentally friendly** as we can and **reducing costs** wherever possible so savings can be invested directly into the services for the people we support.

**If you would like to receive Real News by email rather than by mail please email [samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org](mailto:samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org)**



**Don't forget to recycle your Real News magazine too!**



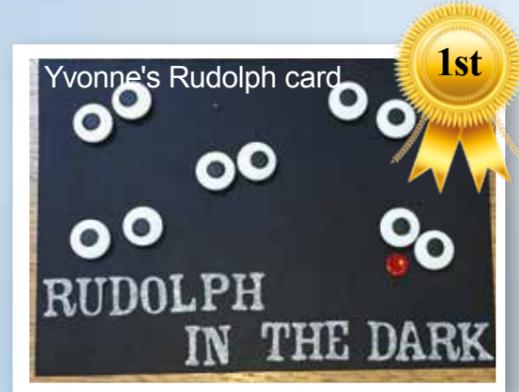
# THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR

## A throwback to the festive season, celebrating our Christmas Card competition

The Real Life Options Head Office team were thrilled to once again receive a ton of fantastic festive entries to the annual Christmas Card and Decoration competition. And this year's entries didn't disappoint; there was loads of artistic talent on display with the people we support producing a whole range of creative masterpieces.

Huge congratulations to Yvonne from Glasgow who claimed the prestigious prize of 'Best Christmas Card' of 2017 with her creative 'Rudolph in the dark' card. Second place went to Helen from Newcastle for her lovely card design, complete with decorative reefs and bows. Fay from Glasgow took third place for her artistic bauble card.

However congratulations also need to be said to the great people who designed such wonderful cards they ended up on Santa's Super Shortlist! Well done to everyone who took part in the competition and we hope you had a fabulous Christmas.



This year's wonderful selection of Christmas Card entries

## FESTIVE FUN TIMES

Everyone was celebrating in style across Real Life Options this past Christmas

Check out these great photos from just some of the Christmas parties that went on across the UK.

## SANTAS SUPER SHORTLIST

- 1st place: Yvonne from Glasgow
- 2nd place: Helen from Newcastle
- 3rd place: Fay from Glasgow

- Alasdair from Glasgow
- Carol from Darlington
- Catriona from Glasgow
- Gail from Elgin
- Gerald from West Lothian
- Helen from Glasgow
- Helen from Saltburn
- Iona from West Lothian
- James from Glasgow
- Karen from Oxford
- Marguerite from Stockton
- Masie from Glasgow
- Mathew from Glasgow
- Maureen from Newcastle
- Melvin from West Lothian
- Nina from Darlington
- Peter from Glasgow
- Valerie from West Lothian



Maureen and Anjum



CEO David and Michael



Festive baking at the Glasgow Christmas Party



Head office staff fundraising on Christmas Jumper Day



Helen and CEO David



Ian and Paul



Sheila, Helen and Michelle



A scrumptious spread at Leeds

# NICE TO MEET YOU

Getting to know some of the brilliant people we support across the UK...

## Anne Marie from Oxford



### What people like and admire about me:

- Friendly
- Always looking smart
- Dresses well
- Able to communicate her needs

### What's important to me:

- Contact with Dad
- Contact with boyfriend Andrew
- Her pet tortoise and fish
- Living in her own flat/home

### How best to support me:

- Support with managing her finance by planning, budgeting and shopping for food and toiletries to last at least a week
- Support with cooking at least one hot healthy meal a day
- Following guidelines on keeping Anne Marie safe at home and in the community

## Wendy from Oxford



### What people like and admire about me:

- Happy and helpful
- People enjoy Wendy's company
- Likes to make others happy

### What's important to me:

- Her family and friends
- To be in people's company
- A happy atmosphere
- Listening to music and dancing
- Attending Albion day centre and clubs
- Having staff support with medication, personal care, cooking, cleaning, emotional support
- Knowing where her things are for easy access

### How best to support me:

- Support to access the community
- Support with finances
- Support with personal care and laundry
- Support with budgeting, shopping and cooking
- Administering medication as prescribed, support to book and attend all medical appointments

Would you like to be featured in a future issue? Or do you know someone who would? Please get in touch with Sam Goodwin on [samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org](mailto:samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org)

# Real Life Entertainment

Hope you enjoy our entertainment section. **Answers can be found on the back page.**

## Wordsearch

See how many words you can find in our wintery wordsearch.

Words may be horizontal, vertical or diagonal.

- COAT
- FIRE
- GLOVES
- HOT CHOCOLATE
- ICE
- JANUARY
- ROBIN
- SCARF
- SKI
- SLEDGE
- SNOW
- SNOWMAN
- WINTER

A	B	M	H	O	T	C	H	O	C	O	L	A	T	E
C	I	D	P	W	H	Z	S	E	K	R	J	A	U	C
E	S	N	A	J	A	N	U	A	R	Y	X	F	O	M
G	S	N	N	C	N	O	N	I	V	C	N	I	G	A
R	G	E	O	V	I	L	O	S	F	A	J	R	R	D
D	L	M	S	W	J	S	D	G	N	H	D	E	P	S
B	O	A	S	U	M	T	L	S	K	O	E	T	B	C
S	V	U	I	W	U	A	P	E	S	T	W	A	U	A
L	E	K	C	Q	R	I	N	Y	D	P	S	E	T	R
V	S	D	E	P	O	A	Y	N	K	G	Y	D	H	F
M	E	S	L	T	B	U	S	R	E	T	E	V	K	L
J	N	N	R	K	I	S	A	K	S	H	T	A	O	N
Y	C	A	S	F	N	W	Z	U	I	E	Q	W	S	H
A	E	O	L	N	R	Y	S	W	H	M	C	O	A	T
X	C	R	W	I	N	T	E	R	J	S	A	R	I	R

## Spot the Difference

Can you spot the 10 differences between the two pictures below?



# Competition Time!

Show off your creative craft skills to win £50!

We'd love for the people we support to share their best craft skills (including, but not limited to, **painting, drawing, card making, montages, origami, jewellery making, sewing, embroidery, crochet and knitting**).

Send a photo of your entry to editor **Sam Goodwin** (details below) by **16th March 2018** to be in with a **chance of winning £50**. Please include your name and contact details so we can let you know if you win.

Competition is open to all the people we support. The winner will be notified by **12th April 2018** and will receive a £50 cash prize. The editor's decision is final.

Congratulations to **Yvonne from Glasgow** who won our 'What do you like about Real Life Options' competition.

**Win  
£50!**

"I like working with different staff who help me keep my house tidy and support me."



## Got News? Get in touch!

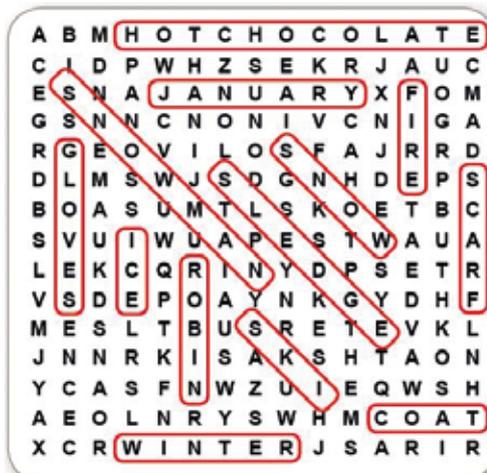
To be a part of the next issue or to share your thoughts simply contact the editor Sam Goodwin:

 [samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org](mailto:samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org)

 01977 781385

 Real Life Options, David Wandless House, A1 Business Park, Knottingley, WF11 0BU

## Real Life Entertainment Answers



Registered charity no: 1156258 (England and Wales) and no: SC045939 (Scotland)

Photo Credits: 3rd Sector Care Awards (p2), Creative Commons BY 2.0 / Patrick Hoesly (p26 & 27), Freemages.com / Lynsey O'Donnell (p20), Freemages.com / Bart Groenhuizen (p20) and Freemages.com / gary tamin (p20)).

RN008