

Real passion, Real people, Real lives.



Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Our Approach	2
Our Year in Numbers	4
Inspiring People: Some of this Year's Highlights	6
An Olympic Success: The Special Olympics 2017	12
Real Compassion: 3rd Sector Care Award Finalists	14
A Real Choice: New Supported Living Service Launched in Oxford	16
Our Year in Review	18
1st Homecare: Going from Strength to Strength	24
Get Involved	27
Life as a Service Manager at Real Life Options	28
Our Team	30
Our Finances	32
Where We Work	33



An Annual Review is about what happened in an organisation in the last business year (April 2017 to March 2018).



This review is for the Real Life Options Group which includes Real Life Options and 1st Homecare.

Introduction

We are pleased to present the Real Life Options Group 2017-18 Annual Review; providing a summary of our business operations and financial performance whilst showcasing inspirational stories, achievements and life choices from the people we support.

This Annual Review provides an opportunity to reflect on our commitment to supporting people to achieve their full potential. It prompts us to take a moment to acknowledge our dedicated and passionate staff, who have once again shown their willingness to go the extra mile in supporting and caring for people across the Real Life Options Group (which comprises Real Life Options and 1st Homecare).

During the year, the Board renewed the constitution to strengthen our governance structure further and to establish a membership framework that will serve the charity well going forward. The Board worked with the Leadership Team to establish clear responsibilities and lines of accountability. This strengthening in leadership and governance has enabled the Real Life Options Group to engage in an exciting strategic planning process.

“Our work is located firmly within our vision to be recognised as leaders in enabling people to achieve their potential and our purpose to provide excellent social care and support. We are confident that our values remain central to our commitment to achieve the very best in high-quality support. Thank you to each of our staff members, partners, supporters and advocates for helping the Real Life Options Group perform so well over the year. As we look to the future, we will continue to focus on innovative services and excellence in person-centred care and support.”

David Sargent, Chief Executive

David Sargent
Chief Executive



David Wilkin
Chair



David Sargent is our Chief Executive and David Wilkin is our Chair. Together they are in charge of the Real Life Options Group.



They are both happy with the good things that happened in the last business year.

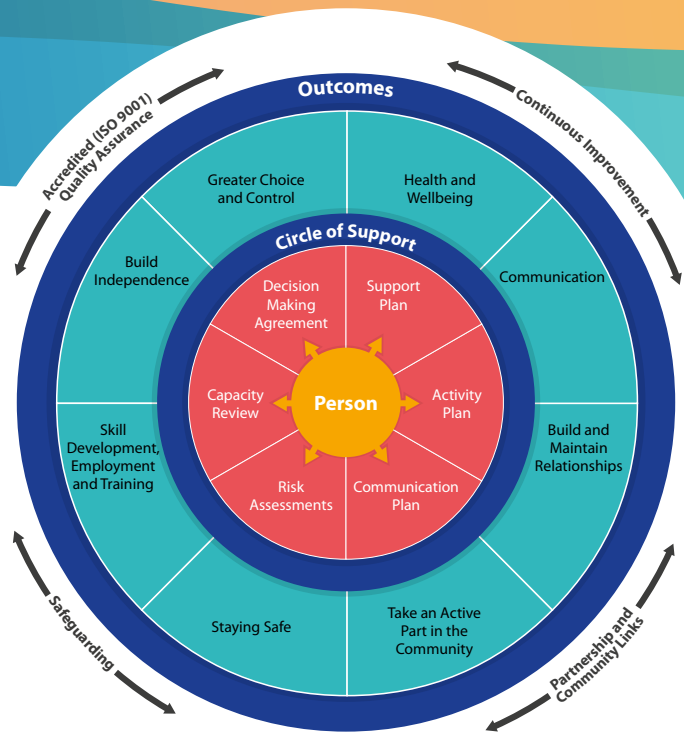
Our Approach

The Real Life Options Group is a leading care provider with a rich history of delivering exceptional support for over 25 years to thousands of people across the UK.

Our person-centred approach empowers people to make choices and live their lives as they choose. We believe that with the right structured support at the right time, people will develop greater independence and reach their full potential.

We pride ourselves in our responsive individualised support for a wide range of people with a variety of needs. These include; learning disabilities, physical disabilities, autism, mental health issues, complex needs and behaviours that challenge in addition to providing care at home.

Today our national organisation employs **1,996 staff** and has a **£41.8m turnover**. Working in close partnership with 43 different local authorities in England and Scotland, we are known for providing self-directed support to ensure people have equal rights as citizens and can maximise their independence and social inclusion in their local communities.



Enabling People to Reach Their Potential

We are continually looking at ways to enhance our service delivery and welcome the recent government initiative *Quality Matters*. This England initiative highlights the need for all multi-disciplinary teams, including providers, to put the needs of the person being supported at the centre. Likewise, the new Care Standards in Scotland and Key to Life Outcomes also underpin our approach to continually driving quality across all our services.

One way we enable this at the Real Life Options Group is to work closely with every person we support to develop their own **person-centred plan**. This identifies their dreams and aspirations and outlines how we can best deliver flexible, safe, 'active support'.

Our Wheel of Support demonstrates the support planning process that underpins our approach. Throughout the Group there are many success stories of this effective approach enabling people to achieve greater independence, confidence and social inclusion.



We make sure we give the right support to help people live the life they choose.



The Wheel of Support explains what we do to help people live their lives the way they choose.

Our Values-Based Approach

Real Life Options was founded on strong values that always put the people we support first so that they are enabled to live their lives as they choose. That approach remains as true today as when the organisation first began and our values of **RESPECT**, **HONESTY**, **RESPONSIBILITY** and **EXCELLENCE** underpin our person-centred approach and help us work towards our vision of enabling every person to achieve their potential – whether they are someone we support or a member of staff.

Our values remain the cornerstone of our annual Real Heroes Awards which celebrate exceptional staff, individuals and supporters and this year also saw the launch of a revamped EasyRead Service Handbook which outlined what the people we support can expect from Real Life Options.



RESPECT



HONESTY



RESPONSIBILITY



EXCELLENCE

A Real Voice: People we Support Forums

Forums have always been very important for Real Life Options as they provide an excellent platform for the people we support to **voice their thoughts and learn more about important issues**.

They also provide an opportunity for the families of the people we support to get involved too and are often attended by local commissioners who want to learn more about how people are supported. Notable figures from the community are also frequent guests and this past year has seen police officers speak to raise awareness of hate crimes and fire officers present interactive talks about fire safety.

Our Glasgow forum has recently evolved to incorporate an **EasyRead Checker Group** who are committed to double-checking EasyRead materials produced in-house to ensure they are suitably accessible and easy to understand for people with learning disabilities.

Developing our Staff to Make a Real Difference

The Real Life Options Group remains committed to developing staff potential with **17,763 places on classroom-based training and e-learning courses** completed by staff across the UK throughout the last financial year.

Support staff who are new to the organisation receive a comprehensive sector-leading induction which covers person-centred approaches and underpins the values of the organisation, in addition to linking in with the standards outlined by Skills for Care and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

As a person-centred organisation, we aim to deliver the highest quality of service and provide a supportive and environmentally friendly culture in which to work, which is reflected in our ISO 9001 (Quality) and ISO 14001 (Environmental) accreditations.



Our values (or how we will do things) help to make sure all our staff support people in the best way.



We have done lots of training to help our staff do the best they can.

Our Year in Numbers

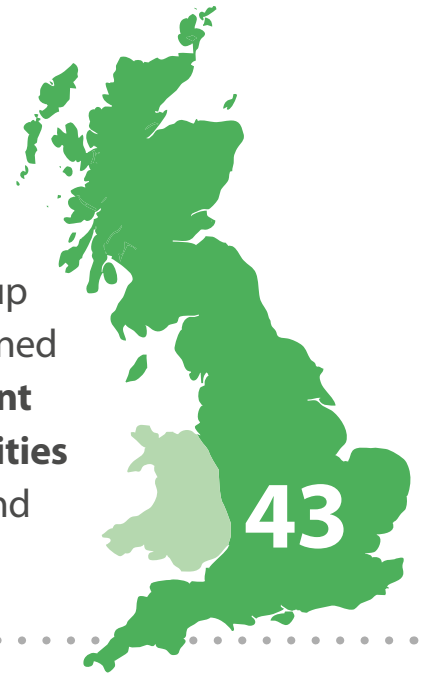


The Real Life Options Group delivers **54,902 hours** of care each week.

This year the Real Life Options Group provided support to **1,579 people**.



The Real Life Options Group is commissioned to **43 different local authorities** in England and Scotland.



The Real Life Options Group continues to work closely with local authorities to **provide cost-effective services**.



Last year we were paid **£41.8 million** to support **1,579 people**.



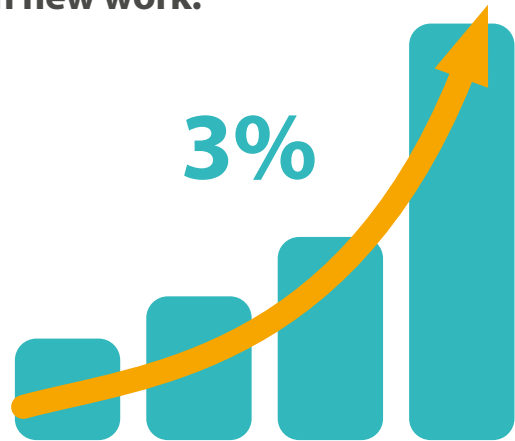
We give **54,902 hours** of care each week to support lots of people in England and Scotland.



This year the Real Life Options Group has **1,996 employees.**

1,996
EMPLOYEES

This year the Real Life Options Group secured a **3% increase in new work.**



12,889 e-learning courses completed by staff.



4,874
CLASSROOM
BASED TRAINING
PLACES

4,874 classroom based training places completed by staff across the UK.



In the last business year we had 1,996 staff. New work grew by 3%.



Training our staff so they can do their best job is very important. We have done lots of classroom training and computer courses to teach staff new things.

Inspiring People

Some of this Year's Highlights...

Special Achievement Award Winners

Well done to our very first winners of the newly launched Special Achievement Awards; Graham from Angus for winning silver and bronze medals in cycling at the Special Olympics National Games (see page 12) and Steph from Leeds for a number of achievements, including speaking at a conference and winning a dance competition.

Chief Executive David Sargent presented the Special Achievement Awards and shared their outstanding stories to inspire the crowd at the last Annual Review Launch Event. Graham and Steph joined David Sargent and Chair, 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 for the organisation.

Steph's New EasyRead Speed Challenge

Steph was also the inspiration behind the recently created EasyRead Speed Challenge magnetic game and she worked closely with the Marketing team to help bring it to life. Designed to be used at a variety of events, including recruitment days and conferences, the 'not-so-easy' game has proved to be excellent at attracting and engaging people to visit our stand.

The competitive speed challenge was designed for two people to race against the clock and match ten EasyRead pictures to ten EasyRead statements relating to Steph's achievements. As well as being fun, the interactive game is very informative about what the people we support can achieve and what a rewarding job being a Support Worker can be. Steph was thrilled to see the finished game in all its glory and unsurprisingly was the fastest at playing it too!



Lots of great things have happened at the Real Life Options Group in the last 12 months.



Graham and Steph were the first people to win the new Special Achievement Award.

All Aboard for Autism

Tyren from Leeds recently raised £115 at the National Autistic Society 5K Sponsored Walk at Drayton Manor Theme Park in Tamworth. He was supported by Nina Burdell and Mickie Gallagher who are both Support Workers and have a great relationship with Tyren. The trio 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.

“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 brilliant 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.”

Lindsey Bird, Team Coordinator

“This sponsored walk was a fantastic achievement for Tyren, 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.”

Malin Burke, Service Manager

Ann and Margaret Recognised for Excellence

West Lothian Council has been extremely complimentary about an innovative new project they have been working on in partnership with two Support Workers from our An Carina Day Service; Ann Logan and Margaret Paton-Lammie. The project involved developing and implementing a year-long programme to create a digital story for a person we support who attends the day service.

The innovative piece of work has really benefited the person and has helped to generate real outcomes for him. The excellent working relationship has paid off in another way too - this piece of work has now been recognised for a European award called ‘Recognised for Excellence.’ This marks the first Health and Social Care Partnership to be nominated for this award, which boasts a number of high-profile previous winners including Coca Cola, BMW and Bosch.

The project was entered into the third stage in Quality Scotland’s award process for a HSCP, Committed to Excellence Project Validation and Committed to Excellence Assessment.



Tyren had a good time raising over £115 by doing a sponsored walk for the National Autistic Society.



Ann and Margaret from our An Carina Day Service have worked on a very good project which was put forward for an award.

Inspiring People

Braving the Beast

Our committed staff teams battled through heavy snowfall and blizzard-like conditions to deliver exceptional support when Britain was battered by icy weather during March. The polar vortex nicknamed 'the Beast from the East' resulted in some of the worst weather conditions experienced in years and caused widespread disruption across the UK.

However, in the face of adversity, heart-warming stories flooded in from across the Real Life Options Group as Service Managers praised staff who had worked extra hours, stayed overnight, drove to pick up colleagues who were stranded by the lack of public transport and even gave up days off in order to cover for staff who were stuck in the most remote areas.

"I am extremely proud of the outstanding dedication and resilience shown by our staff teams across England and Scotland. On behalf of all the directors, I would like to express our gratitude to every single member of staff who battled through the harsh weather to continue delivering support to the people we serve. This was even more crucial for the older and less physically able people we support who may have otherwise been left housebound with no human contact by the extreme weather conditions. The team spirit on display has been overwhelming and I congratulate our staff for pulling together and showing unwavering commitment and sheer determination to put the people we support first. It's an excellent example of how our staff have been living our values and showing how we truly are a person-centred organisation. You are all heroes."

David Sargent, Chief Executive



Interactive Blackboard

One of the walls in our Birkinstyle supported living service has been turned into a giant interactive blackboard so the people we support and staff can create lots of lovely images that can be rubbed off and re-drawn as often as they like.

The innovative board has proven very popular so far and with its accessible wheelchair access everyone can join in to show off their creative flair.

"The people we support absolutely love it and we're considering installing one in another service as well."

Amanda Maquade, Service Manager



Our staff were great at keeping on working, even when the snow made it difficult.



People we support have enjoyed drawing on a new interactive blackboard.

The Great Sister Reunion

Lilian, a lady we support from Redcar, was recently supported by staff to plan a visit to see her sister Jean whom she hadn't seen for over five years. Lilian was joined on the day by Team Coordinator Angela Robinson and she also invited her other sister Anne and her husband Terence, who hadn't seen Jean for fifteen years.

"Arriving at Jean's home in Sheffield was very emotional and it was lovely to see Jean waiting outside to greet everyone. After lots of hugs we all went inside. Jean had arranged a delicious welcome lunch for everyone which was wonderful. It was a great idea originating from Lilian's person-centred review that turned into a fabulous day. It was a pleasure and a privilege to support Lilian and her family to reunite. Lilian had looked forward to the day so much and I am so pleased it was so perfect for them all."

Angela Robinson, Team Coordinator

"It was nice to see Jean because I hadn't seen her for a long time and I missed her. I was excited and I got some lovely outdoor lights for my garden from her. We had a great dinner – I had roast pork, it tasted nice. Jean baked me some cakes – I had some with a cup of coffee. Jean lives in a nice place, I am glad I have seen where she lives. I was happy Anne, Terence and Angela were with me and we all enjoyed the car journey, playing music on our trip. I would like to see Jean again next year."

Lilian from Redcar

Congratulations to Janet and Andrew

Huge congratulations to Janet from Hartlepool who has been achieving great success in her Maths and English classes held by Alfie Lindley, a former Head Teacher. Janet has been putting a lot of hard work into her studying and has already achieved a significant amount.

Andrew from Saltburn has also been making wonderful progress and Alfie is really proud of his achievements to date. After being presented with their certificates, Alfie took the pair out to Hollywood Bowl for a celebratory meal and ten pin bowling to congratulate them.

Light Years Ahead

Catriona from Glasgow got the chance to explore her musical skills this year when staff supported her to plan a fun-filled trip to the Glasgow Science Centre. The purpose-built 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 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."

Callum Blair, Team Coordinator

"I will definitely go back."

Catriona from Glasgow



Lilian planned a visit to see her sister Jean who she hadn't seen for over 5 years and they had a good lunch together.



Well done to Janet and Andrew who got certificates for doing some great work in learning Maths and English.

Inspiring People

Enlightening Interactive Fire Safety Experience

All the people we support in Fraserburgh were thrilled to attend their local fire station for a home fire safety talk. The experience was organised by staff following previous discussions in forums when some people admitted they were not confident in knowing what to do in the event of a fire.

The firefighters held an interactive discussion to explain how to stay safe in your home, for example by not overloading plug sockets and switching off appliances when not in use. People also got the chance to confirm what they should do in the event of a fire, from sounding the alarms to confirming where to meet.

The firefighters also made the wise suggestion that during regular fire drills staff should make the 'fire' at one of the usual exit routes so people can learn that there are different routes of exit in an emergency.

After the safety talk, the people we support got the opportunity to have a look around the fire station, try on outfits, get in the fire engine and even use the fire hose.

"Everyone said they really enjoyed the fire safety talk and learned a lot of useful information. It was a fun, memorable experience but it had a very serious purpose which really resonated with people. The firefighters have also organised coming out to people's homes to do a personal fire safety check to make sure everything discussed has been put into practice."

Darren Moore, Team Coordinator



People we support in Fraserburgh went to their fire station to find out more about how to be safe if there was a fire in their house.



A police officer came to talk to the people we support in Newcastle about how to report Hate Crime (which is when people hurt someone else because they are different).

Learning how to put a Stop to Hate Crime

Police Constable Janine Turnbull from the Northumbria police recently attended our forum in Newcastle to speak to the people we support about Hate Crimes. Accompanied by a student, Amy, PC Turnbull explained about her job and how her Central Communities Engagement Team are working with everyone to tackle Hate Crime.

The lively discussion meant that all the people we support got the opportunity to explain what they thought Hate Crime was and talk about their own experiences. PC Turnbull explained why Hate Crime is wrong and how it can be reported. She also gave some useful tips such as the Text 999 scheme (so people can text rather than phone if they are in danger) and also that bus drivers are trained to help intervene and are responsible for reporting any bullying on their bus. Topics such as who to trust, consent, bogus callers and how to keep yourself safe online were also discussed.

"It was excellent having PC Turnbull come and talk to everyone. She gave out pocket alarms, posters and leaflets on how to report Hate Crimes. She enjoyed her afternoon with us so much that she wants to come along and work with us again!"

Katie Murphy, Team Coordinator



Riding High – Lyn Achieves 5th Place at RDA National Championships

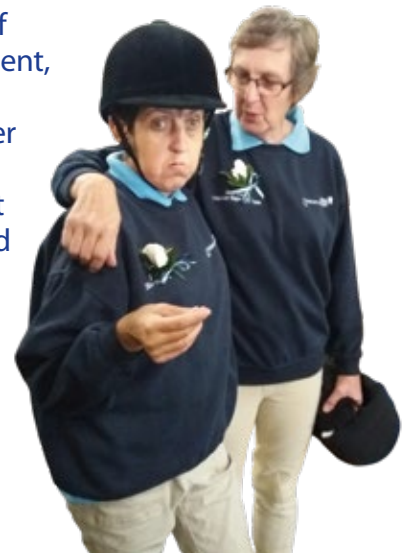
Lyn from Middlesbrough was thrilled to qualify for the 2017 Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) National Championships. Held in Gloucester in July, the National Championships is the RDA's flagship event, bringing together hundreds of competitors of all abilities to compete in events including dressage, show jumping and vaulting.

Supported by Service Manager Leigh McCusker and her Keyworker Carole Johnstone, Lyn arrived in plenty of time and had a chance to meet up with her friends from the Unicorn Riding Centre who were also competing at the event.

Lyn rode her horse Thunder in the prestigious national dressage competition, 'Countryside Challenge'. The event focused on being both challenging and stimulating for the rider, with steering, balance and confidence all put to the test. Lyn rode fantastically and achieved an impressive 5th place, with a high score of 107.

"We are all very proud of Lyn's brilliant achievement, She has been working hard all year to hone her riding skills and it was great to cheer her on at the Championships and see all her dedication pay off."

Leigh McCusker, Service Manager



Lyn from Middlesbrough rode her horse called Thunder in an important horse riding competition for people with disabilities.



Lyn rode very well and got 5th place in the competition. She had a great time and got to meet up with her friends who also go horse riding.

An Olympic Success

Celebrating Graham's Special Olympics Medals

Huge congratulations to Graham from Angus who triumphed in the Special Olympics National Games in August, winning not one but **two medals** in cycling.

Hosted in Sheffield, the tenth Special Olympics GB National Games was the largest multi-sport disability event of 2017. Held every four years, the National Games saw over 2,600 inspiring athletes with learning disabilities come together from across the UK to compete in twenty different sports across four days of competition.

A spectacular Olympic-style Opening Ceremony, headlined by iconic singer Tony Hadley, kicked off the Games at Sheffield United's football stadium, Bramhall Lane, in front of 20,000 people. Graham travelled down from Scotland to compete as part of the Tayside cycling team, and went on to achieve an **impressive silver medal in the 10km race and a bronze medal in the 5km race.**

Originally Graham was asked to try out for the team while attending a Smartfit course run by Angus college about a year previously. After attending the trial he won a place in the Tayside team and since then has attended cycling training every fortnight, showing a huge amount of dedication and commitment.

"Graham has worked so hard on his training. He has been cycling along Arbroath seafront when the weather has been permitting to do so and all his hard work from the past year has finally paid off. His cycling commitment has really improved his confidence and independence and he truly deserves his two medals and the whole staff team are very proud of his wonderful achievement."

Liz Myles, Service Manager

"I had a fantastic time in Sheffield and would love to take part in the Special Olympics again."

Graham from Angus



The Special Olympics was the biggest sporting event for people with learning disabilities in 2017 and 2,600 people took part in 20 different sports.



Graham from Angus won a silver medal and a bronze medal in the cycling competition and said he had a great time and would like to take part again.

Truly Special: Organising the Special Olympics 2017

As a huge multi-sport event, the Special Olympics GB National Games took place at many exciting sporting venues across Sheffield. Organising something so large-scale took a huge deal of organisation and commitment from a specialist team of dedicated volunteers. Luckily Real Life Options Service Manager, Amanda Maquade, was one of the important Volunteer Coordinators on hand to ensure that everything went smoothly.

“As one of the Volunteer Coordinators for the Special Olympics National Games, I was in charge of the All Saints venue which hosted twenty-one basketball teams and six netball teams, in addition to approximately 450 spectators over the four days. I had the critical job of coordinating all the volunteers for the venue which involved devising a rota, allocating roles and overseeing everybody. This included all the sport-specific volunteers who worked closely with the athletes and general volunteers who coordinated the catering and welcome desks.”

It was pretty challenging to organise the sheer number of people but everything was worth it in the end. There was a fantastic atmosphere at the National Games. Everyone was really friendly and my team got a lot of praise from the coaches who said it was all very organised and looked great. There was a real sense of community too. Volunteers came from many diverse backgrounds, all bringing something truly different and unique. Plus, athletes came from all over to compete. We even had one netball team fly over from Australia!

The most important thing for me was to give something back and raise awareness about learning disabilities, which is something I feel really passionate about. I was very committed to ensuring all the volunteers had the best experience so hopefully they will volunteer again in the future and may even consider working in social care.”

Amanda Maquade, Volunteer Coordinator



One of our Service Managers Amanda helped to organise a lot of volunteers to help run the basketball and netball games at the Special Olympics.



Amanda said the most important thing was to show what people with learning disabilities can do.

Real Compassion

3rd Sector Care Award Finalists

The Real Life Options Darlington Road team enjoyed high-profile recognition for their exceptional work this year when they were 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 showcased 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.

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, Director of Operations England Vivien Simon and Area Manager Tracy Connelly.



The Darlington Road staff team were runners up in the internal 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. In addition, staff also initiated informal coffee and cake chat days to better connect with families and improve communication and engagement.



The Real Life Options Team from Darlington Road were finalists for the Compassion Award at the 3rd Sector Care Awards.



Compassion means that the staff team understand how the people they support feel and are kind and gentle in how they care for them.

Anthony Harkin and Caz Hazel did a fantastic job proactively leading the Darlington Road staff team to fundraise and organise a raffle in order to raise enough money to introduce a new multi-sensory room in the service. Specially designed to meet the needs of the people at the service, the room provides a dedicated space in which individuals can develop and engage their senses.

“Anthony has done an amazing job installing the multi-sensory room and all the people at the Darlington Road service absolutely love it. 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.”

Lisa Livingstone, Service Manager

“I’m so proud of the team. 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.”

Tracy Connelly, Regional Head of Operations



The Darlington Team were at the awards because they had helped a new Service Manager and learnt lots of new ways of working to make things better.



They also raised money to make a new multi-sensory room so people could enjoy lots of different sounds, colours and noises.

A Real Choice

New Supported Living Service Launched in Oxford

Real Life Options was thrilled to announce the official opening of a new supported living service based in Oxford. The occasion was marked with an exciting open day in July and the ribbon was officially cut by the people who now live at the flats.

Chief Executive David Sargent represented Real Life Options at the event along with Regional Head of Operations Joanne Allen. Also in attendance were Anneliese Dodds MP for Oxford East, Councillor Lawrie Stratford and County Councillor Liz Brighthouse, in addition to a number of representatives from Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council and representatives from the other partner organisations involved in the scheme.

The new supported living service offers a high level of independence and security and consists of ten flats, accommodating fifteen people in total. The flats were specially designed to accommodate a wide range of needs for people with learning disabilities, therefore they are flexible and spacious throughout. The flats are serviced by a lift and they all have wide doorways which are accessible for wheelchairs and incorporate underfloor heating which provides a constant temperature.



In 2017 Real Life Options opened a new Supported Living service in Oxford for 15 people living in very nice, new flats.



Supported Living means that people can live in their own homes but need a bit of help from Support Workers to do some things.

“We are really excited to be the support provider for this project and to be working in close partnership with Oxfordshire County Council and other local organisations. Real Life Options has had an established presence in Oxford for over ten years and our local expertise is backed up by a national structure across the UK. We have an excellent track record of establishing new services and recruiting committed staff teams. In fact, in our

recent staff survey, 100% of our staff in Oxford said they felt that the work they do gives them a sense of personal achievement. I would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to all the people at the service who are now supported by Real Life Options and to all the new staff members who have come on board.”

David Sargent, Chief Executive



The new flats were specially built for people with disabilities so wheelchairs can easily fit through the doors.



Our Chief Executive David said he was very happy about the new service and about working with other companies to do the best job.

Our Year in Review

2017–18 was an exceptional year for the Real Life Options Group. Achieving over 3% growth in new business, a number of new services were added to our growing portfolio alongside the launch of innovative activities to further improve the quality of our existing services and improve efficiency across the organisation.

Here's a round-up of just some of the great activities that have been going on across the UK.

Have Your Say Staff Survey

Following the latest biennial Staff Survey for all employees and the ongoing Service Survey for the people we support, 2017–18 provided the ideal opportunity to embed new practices based on valuable feedback and opinions gathered.

A dedicated Have Your Say group was formed to ensure that key actions were implemented across the organisation, which included the launch of the Employee Assistance Programme, the introduction of the Reward and Recognition Working Party, a review of the Supervision Process and the addition of physical suggestion boxes at all our Area Offices (alongside our digital Tell Us email address).



98%

of people we support think that staff are friendly and know them well



97%

of people we support are happy with the support they receive



Lots of great things have happened at Real Life Options in the last business year.



We have been making good changes after feedback from the last staff survey.

Employee Assistance Programme

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

The Real Life Options Group was proud to launch the new Employee Assistance Programme. This new 24/7 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 and telephone counselling, a 24-hour medical helpline, debt, financial and legal information and telephone-based guidance for managers to enable them to become more effective and confident in their roles. There is also comprehensive online support available which showcases a whole host of information and resources designed to assist with the challenges of daily life.

Reward and Recognition Working Party

Ensuring our staff feel valued and appreciated.

The introduction of our dedicated Reward and Recognition Working Party demonstrates our ongoing commitment to improving staff engagement and job satisfaction.

The group includes representatives from a number of different areas and is focused on identifying new ways in which we can reward and recognise staff at all levels to ensure they feel appreciated.

“As a person-centred organisation, the wellbeing of our staff is important to us. The introduction of the Employee Assistance Programme means every member of staff will be able to receive structured, impartial and confidential support at a time to suit them. Even better is that the services are also available to partners and children over the age of 16, meaning the whole family benefits.”

Andrea Holden, HR Manager



A new Staff Help service was launched so people could phone up to get help and find out more about money and being healthy.



A group is helping to think of new ways to show we value our staff.

Our Year in Review

Actively Supporting People

We are pleased to announce the success of a pilot scheme that is delighting people we support, wowing our funders and inspiring our staff. The initiative, recommended by Positive Behavioural Support Practitioner and Regional Head of Operations for Yorkshire and the North East, Tracy Connelly, piloted Active Support at two services in her region.

The aim of Active Support is to ensure that people with even the most significant disabilities have ongoing, daily support to be engaged in a variety of life activities and opportunities of their choice. Staff involved in the pilot scheme (some who are pictured right) received intensive training in partnership with the Association for Real Change (ARC) to learn how to support people with the right level of assistance so that they can do all the typical daily activities that arise in life.

Since the pilot, the culture in both services has shifted from a caring environment to an enabling one, where families, commissioners and staff report seeing major positive results in such a short time. Real Life Options is encouraged by the progress made and plans to extend Active Support to additional services during 2019.

Vivien Simon, Director of Operations England

“I think the active involvement programme is an excellent idea and gives my sister a feeling of independence and also enables her to make an important contribution to her own welfare and day to day living... It would appear to me that she not only enjoys the programme but is also learning new skills, growing in self-confidence and developing her own personality.”

Lynne from Kent



We are learning how to support people to do more for themselves. It is called Active Support.



Lynne thinks Active Support is very good. Lynne's sister is learning new skills and is more confident.

Our Partnerships

From the very start, the Real Life Options Group has been committed to working in partnership with other organisations and networks.

We believe that by working together we can have a bigger impact in influencing developments in public policy that will ensure social care continues to develop in ways that offer choice and control for people with learning disabilities. We are active members of the Association for Real Change (ARC), ARC Scotland, Coalition of Care Providers in Scotland, the Voluntary Organisations Disability Group, Learning Disability England, the Care and Support Alliance, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and the Voluntary Organisations Disability Group.

Improving Efficiency and Effectiveness

Hot on the heels of the introduction of SharePoint, 2017–18 saw the launch of MyView; the new HR and Payroll system which has been exceptionally well received. Focused on improving efficiency and effectiveness across the organisation MyView digitalises annual leave requests.

New features are being introduced to provide staff with real time access to information and the ability to update their own personal details.

Registered Managers Network

The Real Life Options Group is a staunch advocate for sharing best practice to improve standards, skills and knowledge across the social care and support sectors and has been an active participant of the Registered Managers Network for some time now.

Despite having over 150 active networks across England, a gap was identified in the Teesside area. Registered Manager Samantha Gardener seized the opportunity to get more involved by offering to host and chair meetings for a new network group.

The Teesside Network assemble as a minimum three times a year with attendees from providers within the local area. Despite its infancy, the group swiftly gained momentum and has developed a strong synergy across its members. Having initially identified common Care Quality Commission themes, specialists are invited to attend Network meetings to share their expertise with the group, which to date has included representatives from the fire brigade to discuss fire safety management and a community nurse to focus on best practice around medication. The Group is delighted to receive very positive feedback from Skills for Care for its proactivity, commitment and drive and looks forward to building positive partnerships within its local communities.

Toni Fyfe, Regional Head of Operations



We have been working with other companies to make things better for people with learning disabilities or autism.



Some of our Managers go to special meetings to help them learn how we can support people better.

Our Year in Review

Empowering Staff to Achieve Excellence in their Roles

The Real Life Options Group Workforce Development Programme sets out structures and development pathways for all roles with clear objectives so people can better understand their responsibilities.

This innovative approach is being applied to give greater flexibility to enable the people we support through a range of different training options, which in turn enhances staff's career potential and professional development opportunities.

Evidence so far suggests that this approach helps to increase job satisfaction and empowers people to achieve the very best in their roles, in addition to ensuring better staff retention.

Through matching competencies to roles within the organisation, this also means we can focus on training and equipping the next generation of managers.

"The primary focus of our development programme is to support our staff through the entire cycle of employment, from initial recruitment and induction, through to training and ongoing mentoring, which will help to improve job satisfaction and better establish social care as a career of choice."

David Sargent, Chief Executive

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, which enables graduates and students to gain valuable experience of marketing, business development and communications in the social care sector and provides them with the opportunity to work on real projects with genuine responsibility.

In addition to benefiting the interns' personal development and contributing to their future career aspirations, the extra resource also means we can more actively promote the great work the Real Life Options Group does through an increasing number of platforms, which includes the further development of our social media channels.

"My time at Real Life Options gave me a great opportunity to undertake meaningful work to not only aid my degree, but also my future career. I really enjoyed my time here and have learnt a lot!"

Olivia Conneely, Marketing and Business Development Intern



We are making sure that we help all of our staff to keep learning new things so they are happier in their jobs and might be managers in the future.



We have started having people volunteer to help write the Real News magazine and put new stories on the website so they can learn more about work.



Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) Registration – Our rolling programme to support our Scottish staff

Given that all our 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 October 2019, it was important for the Real Life Options Group to aid our staff through what could be for some a daunting process. Therefore a rolling programme was launched with the aim of supporting all staff to register so no one gets left behind and ensuring every service is fully compliant on a planned basis well ahead of the official deadline date. Staff are required to adhere to the SSSC codes of conduct which means the people of Scotland can count on social services being provided by a trusted, skilled and confident workforce.

“There are multiple benefits to the SSSC register which aims to improve public confidence and ensure the entire workforce demonstrate the same level of competence. The Real Life Options Group already benefits from a highly professional staff team who are all officially qualified in Health and Social Care (to at least SVQ Level 2), but it’s great to see these high standards are being formalised across the whole social care sector in Scotland.”

John McDonald, Executive Director

Dignity in Care

Ensuring people are enabled and assisted to make choices, have control and maintain a sense of purpose in their daily lives.

The Real Life Options Group proudly fundraised and sought to raise awareness of the **2018 Dignity Action Day**. Building upon last year, activities were focused around the importance of dignity in care and celebrating the difference all our Support Workers make in the lives of the people we support every day.

Aligned with the Real Life Options Group vision and values, the Dignity Action Day seeks to ensure people who use care services are treated as individuals and are given choice, control and a sense of purpose in their daily lives.

In addition to fundraising and awareness building, our staff were also encouraged to sign up as Dignity Champions to join the Dignity In Care national network of over 95,000 individuals and organisations who work to put dignity and respect at the heart of UK care services to enable a positive experience.

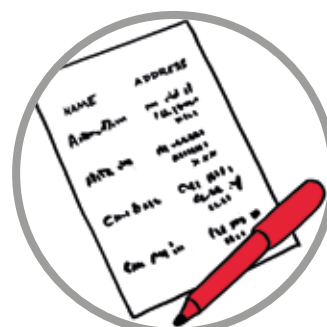
Improving Community and Staff Engagement

As part of our ongoing commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility, the Real Life Options Group is passionate about giving back to the communities in which we work. During 2017–18 we continued our well-established monthly charity day initiative, whereby our offices and services host different events each month to support a range of charities and raise awareness of a variety of important issues.

From Macmillan Cancer Support and Save The Children to Sport Relief, our teams have been enthusiastically organising a diverse range of activities; from bake sales and staff sports days to mummy wrapping competitions, all in aid of worthy causes.



We raised money and supported Dignity Action Day, which celebrated all the good things Support Workers do.



We have been helping staff sign up to the SSSC register, which is a list of all the people who care for others in Scotland.

Our Year in Review: 1st Homecare

Going from Strength to Strength

With a new Manager at the helm,
1st Homecare looks to the future.

The 2017-18 financial year saw the exciting new appointment of Sheilah Harvey who joined 1st Homecare in charge of overseeing all operations. 1st Homecare is a key subsidiary company of the Real Life Options Group that delivers personalised care at home and support services to people in Scotland.

With over three decades of experience in the Health and Social Care sector, Sheilah brings a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm to the 1st Homecare team. She is keen to fully immerse herself in the role to ensure that all care and support continues to be delivered to the highest standard, as well as exploring future opportunities for growth.

"I am delighted to have joined such a dynamic team here at 1st Homecare. Originally born and raised in Edinburgh, I trained as a Registered Nurse before moving to Australia 27 years ago. I recently returned to the UK and can clearly see a number of synergies, similarities and challenges between the UK and Australian social care sectors. I believe I bring a fresh, optimistic yet realistic set of ideas, knowledge and skills to assist us as an organisation to accomplish what we set out to achieve."

Sheilah Harvey, Head of 1st Homecare



1st Homecare is our Care at Home service used by people in Scotland. This means they are helped in their own homes.



Sheilah Harvey is the new person in charge of 1st Homecare and says she is very excited to help make things even better for the people we support.

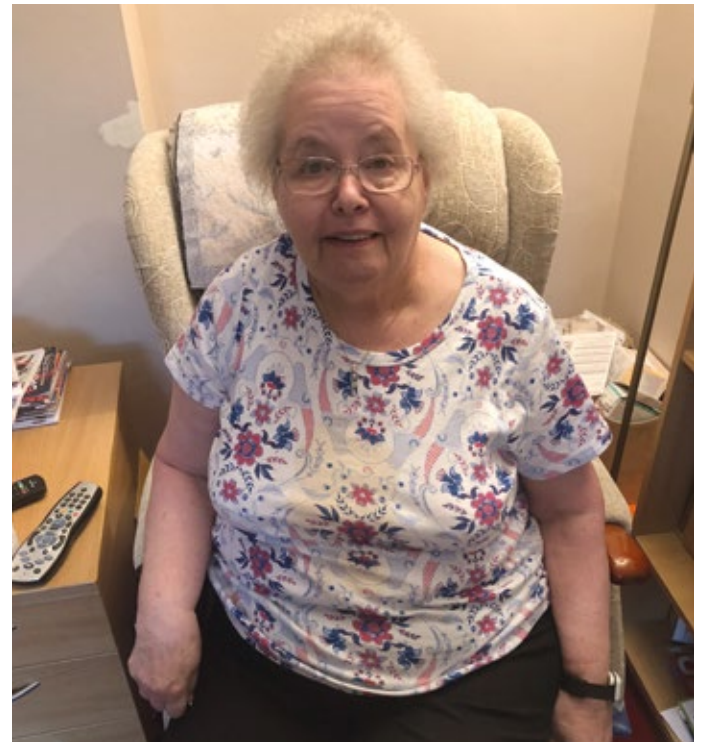
Another Successful Year

We are pleased to announce a very successful year that focused on streamlining processes across our current services in order to provide a strong, dynamic platform for further growth and change. During the last 12 months, 1st Homecare expanded its geographical reach into South Ayrshire and achieved an overall improvement in the quality of care provided as measured by the Care Inspectorate, who awarded a 'Good' rating.

Looking ahead, our overarching goal is to improve this even further and achieve a 'Very Good' or 'Excellent' rating in the next financial year. A strong commitment to our core values of Respect, Honesty, Responsibility and Excellence continues to drive the work that we do and the ongoing development of our transformational culture programme will be a critical success factor in our organisational effectiveness, safety performance and productivity.

We welcomed Scotland's new Health and Social Care Standards which came into effect April 2018. The standards seek to provide better outcomes and to ensure that all individuals are treated with respect and dignity and that the basic human rights we are all entitled to, are upheld.

Older members of our community want more control, choice and better access to the services they need with many wanting to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. The standards provide a tremendous opportunity for innovation and increased flexibility in the way that 1st Homecare responds to needs and expectations, including restorative and early intervention programmes.



Technology will play an important role in the shaping of our service delivery models, providing us with real time information and the agility to respond quickly to clients' changing needs.

"I would like to acknowledge the commitment and dedication of all our 1st Homecare staff without whom we would not be able to deliver such high value to the people we support and the broader community."

Sheilah Harvey, Head of 1st Homecare



Inspectors say that 1st Homecare is good at looking after people. Sheilah wants 1st Homecare to get even better at caring for people at home.



Older people want to choose how to live their lives. Some older people want support to live in their own homes.

Our Year in Review

Athena Day

Our Athena Day event in 2017 brought together key decision makers and influencers from across the organisation to exchange ideas and develop creative solutions for shaping future strategy. Attendees were invited to identify opportunities for optimising Real Life Options' charitable status that would add value and capacity for delivering existing and additional person-centred support services. Options were explored and significant areas for further investigation ascertained, namely fund-raising and grant-based funded activities, engaging with volunteers and relationship-based social investment. Plans are now underway in building our community connections that will see the introduction of a skills academy and non-commissioned funding to enhance the quality of the lives of the people we support.

Inspiring the Next Generation

Real Life Options staff promote social care to young people.

Support work is widely 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. During 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. 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.



We had some great ideas at our Athena Day to help the people we support.



This year Real Life Options have gone to events to teach young people about what it is like to work as a Support Worker.



Fundraising in Action

As a registered charity, lots of dedicated people have fundraised for Real Life Options to **raise money and awareness**. Recently Anthony Kay, from our IT partner organisation, and his friend Michael Jeans braved an exhilarating skydive to raise money after being inspired by Michael's brother who has autism.

Excitingly this year we were able to put that money into action and purchase a **new computer for our An Carina Day Service in West Lothian**. The timing couldn't have been more perfect as a young person had recently joined the service who enjoys using the new computer and playing online games.

To find out more about how you could fundraise for us, check out our website: www.reallifeoptions.org/donate

Staying in Touch

The families and friends of the people we support are often very involved with their lives and the services we provide to meet their individual needs. We produce our **magazine Real News** to help keep everyone up to date with the latest developments and activities taking place across the Real Life Options Group.

A digital version of Real News is also available which people can choose to receive if they prefer, which is helping to improve our environmental efficiency and cost effectiveness while making sure everyone still stays informed and up to date.



This year we bought a new computer for our An Carina Day Centre with money that people had raised for us.



We have a company magazine called Real News that has lots of great stories from the people we support.

Life as a Service Manager at Real Life Options

Gary Ford from Falkirk began his career at the Royal Scottish National Hospital, caring for individuals with extremely complex behaviours until its closure in 2002. Keen to widen his experience in the care sector, he worked for a variety of organisations across the Central Lowlands of Scotland before joining Real Life Options in 2016. Gary explains what it means to be a Service Manager at one of the UK's leading person-centred care and support providers.

"It's important to me that every individual we support has the opportunity to live a happy and fulfilling life. It's what keeps me going every day."

What does a typical day look like?

My working day starts at 9am with updates from staff and a catch up with the Outreach Team Coordinator. Emails are checked and responded to with any necessary actions put in to place. I'll review Falkirk Council's service requirements and place bids where we can meet their requirements. My office base is at a registered Care Home, so I spend some time with the people we support and any visiting family members or multi-disciplinary team representatives. Throughout the week, I generally meet with some of the people we support in their own home to review the service they are receiving from us and meet with members of staff for one to one supervision.

What do you really love about your job?

I manage a Care Home for adults as well as a Housing Support and Care at Home service in the Falkirk area where the age range of the people we support falls between 18 to 98 so support needs are very diverse. I love working with my teams to identify how we can improve what we do to enrich the lives of the people we support. I'm passionate about developing my staff and helping them progress in their job roles. After all, they may well be Real Life Options' future managers.

How do you see your management style?

One of the things that attracted me to join Real Life Options is its person-centred approach, where everyone is treated as an individual. Whether I'm with people we support, their families or other professionals, I try to adjust the way that I communicate to suit their needs. I appreciate that each staff member is different and that they may require support and management from me in slightly different ways.

What qualities help when in the role of Service Manager?

It helps to have empathy, understanding and lots of common sense. You do need to have leadership skills and to be assertive when necessary whilst being a good listener and an effective communicator. In this type of work, it is more productive and motivating to look for solutions rather than being problem-focused. Being competent at IT is a distinct advantage but most of all accepting that there's no such thing as a model manager - I've still got lots to learn.



Gary is a Service Manager for Real Life Options in Scotland. He has been supporting people for over 20 years.



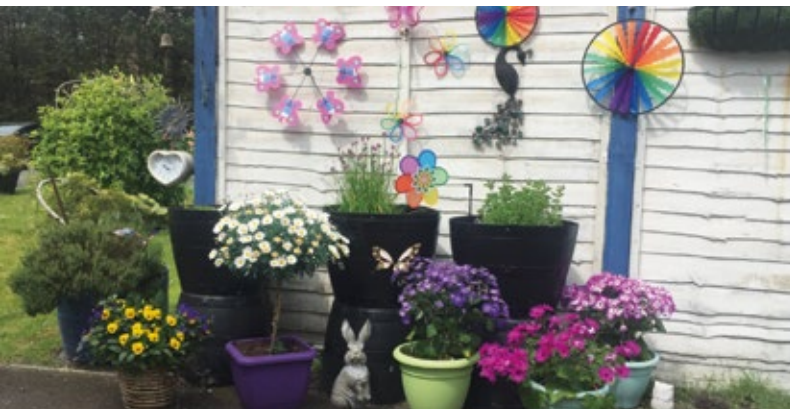
Some of Gary's staff support people in a care home for adults and some of his staff support people in the community.

How well do you get to know the people your teams support?

There is a lot of preparation work done before we even begin to support an individual which involves me meeting with the person and their multi-disciplinary team to get to know them, talk with them about their support needs and provide them information about our services and organisation. Consequently, I know most of the people we support very well. I am at the Care Home service most days and have plenty of interactions with the people who live there. I meet regularly with the people we support through our Outreach service to maintain contact and ensure that people are happy with the service they are receiving.

Why is it important to have the right staff?

The staff are the service. The right staff will provide the correct level of support and care which in turn helps the people we support achieve positive outcomes. We need staff who can work to our values, who respect people's choices and ensure that their wishes are met. I am very proud of the commitment shown by my teams. We have staff who are always willing to go that extra mile to ensure that we provide the best services possible. They're extremely innovative in identifying and sourcing new activities and interests, which are then offered to the people we support so that they can make informed choices about their lives.



How important is it to develop your teams?

Encouraging people to develop their skills and knowledge is so important as it builds confidence and helps staff to feel valued. In my experience, staff who feel valued are happier at their work and happy staff usually means happy clients. A few of my team are currently undertaking their SVQ qualifications. Team Coordinator Tracey Monaghan and I really appreciate how hard they are working towards this, and have been able to offer support and advice throughout the course. It's been good to see how they are working together and supporting each other through the process too.

And finally, if you could sum up your job in three words, what would it be?

**INTERESTING,
CHALLENGING,
REWARDING.**



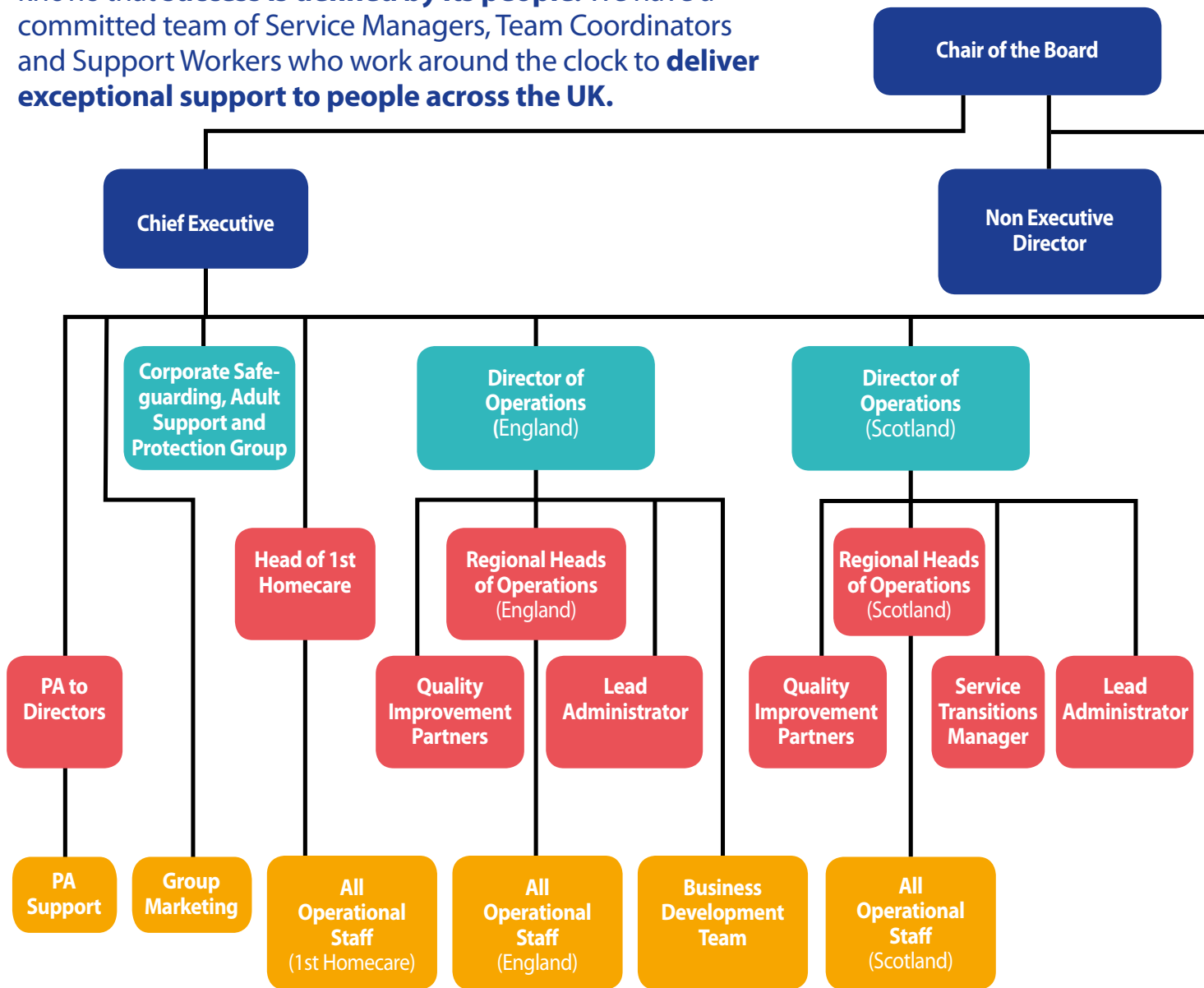
Gary says that to be a good manager, you need to be good at listening and have lots of common sense.



Gary is proud of his staff. They respect people's choices and make sure their wishes are met.

Our Team

As a person-centred organisation, the Real Life Options Group knows that **success is defined by its people**. We have a committed team of Service Managers, Team Coordinators and Support Workers who work around the clock to **deliver exceptional support to people across the UK**.

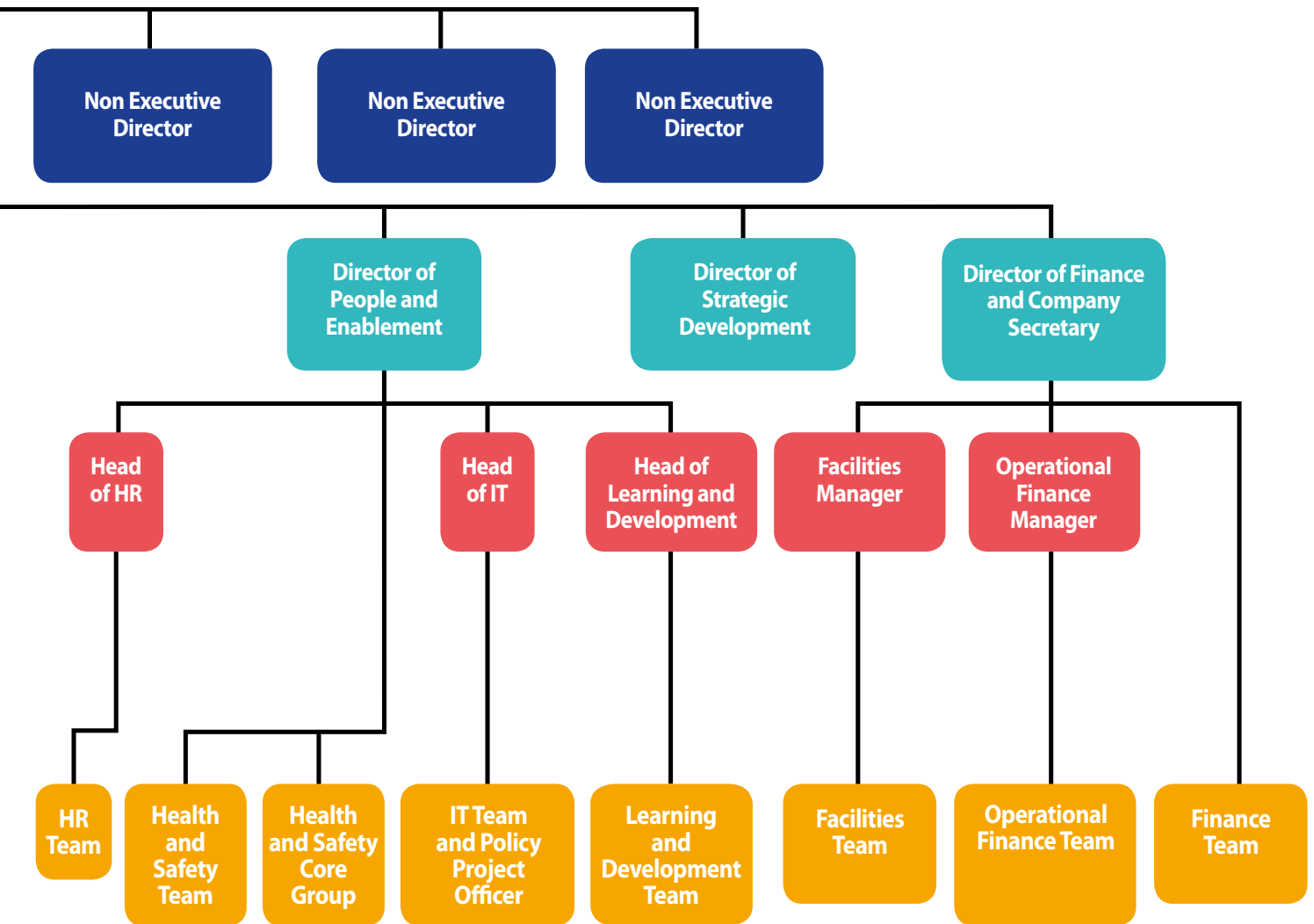


The people who work at Real Life Options are very important in making it a good company.



The chart on this page shows all the different teams and says who is in charge of each team.

The Real Life Options Group is overseen by a Board of Directors, the Leadership Team and a number of Regional Heads of Operations who provide operational support for different geographic regions.



The Chair (David Wilkin) and his team are in charge of everybody else. His team are called the Board.



The Board makes sure everyone is doing their job right and people are being supported in the best way.

Our Finances

We are very pleased to report a **successful year with an annual turnover of £41.8m.** This is an increase from the previous financial reporting period's figure of £39.7m due to higher levels of activity throughout England and Scotland, with new services generating additional income. Fee levels have increased largely in response to a rise in the National Minimum Wage and Scottish Living Wage. There has been a change in the mix of our service provision, with a continuing shift from residential care to supported living and housing support, as we endeavour to help the people we support live as independently as possible.

The following is a summary of the Real Life Options Group financial results over the last financial year 2017–18.

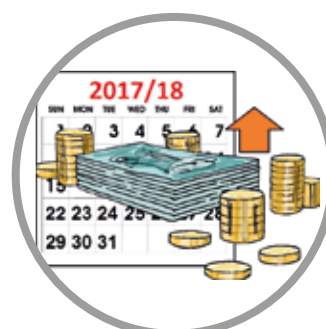
	2017–18 Total	2016–17 Total
Turnover	£41,836,000	£39,714,000
Expenditure	£41,170,000	£39,130,000
Net Incoming Resources	£666,000	£584,000
Reserves	£6,240,000	£5,484,000

This Financial Summary is not the full statutory accounts but is a summary of the information which appears in the full accounts.

If required for further information the full accounts can be viewed on our website:
www.reallifeoptions.org



Last year, we were paid £41.8 million to help support people in England and Scotland.



This is more than last year because we have supported more people in more places in England and Scotland.

Where We Work



The Real Life Options Group operates throughout England and Scotland with the map representative of geographic spread from London to Elgin.

Head Office:

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

Tel: 01977 781800
www.reallifeoptions.org

Scotland Operational Office:

Real Life Options,
2nd Floor, Academy House,
1346 Shettleston Road,
Glasgow G32 9AT

Tel: 0141 778 3949

1st Homecare Ltd Registered Office:

Unit 14B, Dickson Street,
Elgin Industrial Estate,
Dunfermline, Fife,
KY12 7SN

Tel: 01383 842947
www.1sthomecare.co.uk



Real Life Options has lots of services in England and Scotland where we help support people to live their lives the way they want to.



To find out more you can phone us on **01977 781800** or visit our website: **www.reallifeoptions.org**

Real Life Options

a real choice | a real voice | a real difference

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 **Tel: 01977 781800**

 **Email: info@reallifeoptions.org**

 **Website: www.reallifeoptions.org**

 **Facebook: [/RealLifeOptions](https://www.facebook.com/RealLifeOptions)**

 **Twitter: [@RealLifeOptions](https://twitter.com/RealLifeOptions)**



Real Life Options is registered as a charity in England (No.1156259)
and in Scotland (No SC045939). RLO015