

Putting people first every day



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We are delighted to introduce the Real Life Options Group 2018-2019 Annual Review. This provides a summary of business operations and financial performance while showcasing some of our inspirational stories, achievements and life choices from the people we support.

At Real Life Options everything we do is underpinned by our core values of respect, honesty, responsibility and excellence. We live and breathe these values, from the way we support people to have greater control and choices in their lives, to developing our business strategy, how we connect with local communities and in the way we recruit and develop our staff and volunteers. We are committed to cultivating an environment where the people we support are respected as equals, their rights as citizens are championed and they feel safe, secure and supported in their homes and communities. We also provide a workplace where integrity and ownership are key, potential is developed and where innovation to drive change in social support and care is fully embraced.

“People are the cornerstone of everything we do at Real Life Options. At the centre of the organisation are the people we support and our staff who provide excellent care. We are committed to providing leadership in social support and care so that people can achieve their potential. We are confident that our values are central in our commitment to achieve the very best in high quality support. Over this last year we have been able to build on foundations which enable us to create new models of service and to improve our existing delivery. We are very confident about the future and look forward to exploring many opportunities for growth and development.”

David Sargent, Chief Executive

David Wandless, founder of Real Life Options, sadly passed away on 22nd April 2019. David will always be remembered as someone committed and dedicated in growing a social enterprise that champions the rights of people with learning disabilities and autism. His vision for Real Life Options in 1992 was to build an organisation that supports individuals to live a life with choices and one where they are supported to reach their potential. David's goal still remains a Real Life Options core ambition to this very day.

Thank you to all of our staff, partners, supporters and advocates for helping the Real Life Options Group to achieve excellence over the year.

David Sargent
Chief Executive



David Wilkin
Chair



An Annual Review is about what happened in an organisation in the last business year (April 2018 to March 2019).



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



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 very happy about all the good things that happened in the last business year.

Our Approach

Our Approach

The Real Life Options Group is a well-established provider of social support and care, enabling thousands of people across the UK to have a **strong voice and a real choice** in the way they live their lives.

We know that changes in health and personal circumstances can impact the level of support people need as they continue through life. By providing the right level of personalised support at the right time, individuals retain greater independence and are enabled to achieve their potential.

We are known for providing responsive, individualised support for a wide range of people including those with learning disabilities, autism, physical disabilities, complex needs and behaviours that challenge, in addition to care at home for older people.

Our national organisation has a **turnover of £44.4m** and **employs 2,033 staff**. Working in close partnership with **45 different local authorities** in England and Scotland, we provide self-directed support to ensure that people have equal rights as citizens and the best possible opportunities to maximise their independence and social inclusion in their local communities.



A Year of Transformational Change

The Real Life Options Group began the financial year with an ambitious plan, to drive **transformational change that would create innovative services** for the benefit of the people we support. As the financial year closes, we have a leaner, more agile business structure and clear strategic themes focused on safeguarding the people we support and delivering excellent social support and care.

Former Non-Executive Director Ian Hardcastle joined the Leadership Team as Chief Operating Officer with a number of key priorities; to assist in driving organisational strategy, improve organisational effectiveness and strengthen employee engagement.

In addition to Ian's appointment, we welcomed two new members to the Board of Trustees; Hannah Mounsey and Roy Swales. As trustees, they perform a vital role; to monitor performance and ensure that we meet our charity's agreed goals and objectives.

Hannah has a wealth of experience in supporting children with disabilities, young adults with autism and runs a community enterprise that improves leisure opportunities for disabled people. Roy's specialism lies with people and leadership development, shaped by a multi-faceted career at home and abroad.

Ian, Hannah and Roy share a common goal; to contribute towards business excellence and support people to flourish and thrive in an encouraging and supportive environment.



Three new people are helping us run our charity better. They are called Ian, Hannah and Roy.

Planning for a Real Future

At the Real Life Options Group, we continually look for ways to ensure that we are fully equipped to meet the needs of the people we support. Our Leadership Team together with the newly formed Senior Leadership Group, embarked on a series of meetings and events in Glasgow, Leeds and Birmingham to create and develop a strategy that improves co-production and drives innovation.

'Our Plan' is the Real Life Options Group's five year blueprint and strategic direction, steering us towards 2022. Built on seven core themes underpinned by an ethos of safeguarding and aligned to our core values of respect, honesty, responsibility and excellence, it provides a framework for ideas generation and agile working. Our strategic goals focus on providing a gold standard service and personalised experience for every person we support whilst attracting and retaining a values-driven workforce.



Building on our credentials as a socially responsible member within our localities, we are increasing opportunities for people to be active and valued members within their local communities. Efficient working practices combined with an effective organisation structure provides a strong foundation for delivering excellent frontline support that anticipates people's needs and is resilient to change.

The last financial year has seen the successful streamlining of our new efficient values-based recruitment process, the development of paper-light systems and processes, the introduction of a new internal app-based communication channel (**Real Talk**) and the launch of **ASCEND**, a best-in-class leadership and development programme.



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



Our managers went to important meetings to make big plans about how to support people better in the future.



We have changed the way that we do some things to make sure everyone works well together.

Our Year in Numbers



The Real Life Options Group delivers **55,783 hours** of care each week.

The Real Life Options Group is commissioned to **45 different local authorities** in England and Scotland.



This year the Real Life Options Group has **2,033 employees**.



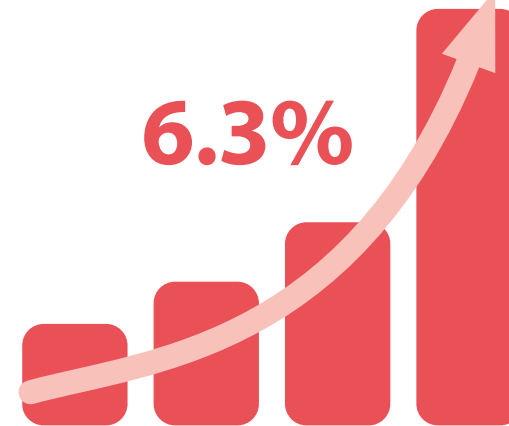
3,014 classroom-based training places were attended.

This year the Real Life Options Group provided support to **2,308 people**.



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

This year the Real Life Options Group secured a **6.3% increase in annual turnover**.



Staff across the UK completed **12,464 e-learning courses**.



Last year we were paid 44.4 million pounds to support 2,308 people.



We give 55,783 hours of support each week to lots of people in England and Scotland.



In this last business year we were paid 6.3 percent more for the work we do.



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...

National Learning Disability Awards Success

Support staff from across Real Life Options enjoyed high-profile recognition for their exceptional work when they received nominations for the **National Learning Disability and Autism Awards**. The awards celebrate excellence in the support for people with learning disabilities and autism, and pays tribute to those individuals or organisations who excel in providing quality care and support.

Anth Harkin from our Darlington team won the national 'Support Worker (Not for Profit)' award and Sarah Ryan, Supported Living Lead in Redcar was a national finalist in the 'Making a Difference' category.

A number of Real Life Options representatives attended the Awards ceremony in Birmingham, including Chief Executive David Sargent, Head of Specialist Support and Development Tracy Connelly, Service Manager Leigh McCusker and Dawn from Redcar who has been supported by Sarah over the past 3 years to manage her Dementia (more on that on page 8).

"It was a fabulous evening celebrating the dedication and care provided by staff in social care," said David Sargent. "I'm very proud of Anth and Sarah who work hard day in and day out to support people. They are both exceptionally talented."



"A big thank you to everyone who supported me... It's a thrill and an honour to receive this award and to be acknowledged and appreciated on behalf of all Support Workers at Real Life Options."

Anth Harkin, Support Worker

"To be nominated was a little overwhelming to begin with but it's a nice feeling to know that your work is getting recognised and also getting used in some other services too. The award ceremony itself was amazing to be part of and lovely to share the experience with Dawn who said all she has ever wanted was to go away with Real Life Options staff. It's safe to say she loved every minute of it."

Sarah Ryan, Supported Living Lead

A Blooming Marvellous Achievement

Gordon from Aberdeen achieved a wonderful **hat-trick of three awards** last year for services to his local community. A keen gardener, he volunteers three days a week at Garthdee allotments, along with his Support Worker Mike Patterson. Both have been involved in several community-based projects, including a scheme to build raised flower-beds for a new Special Education school in Aberdeen. In addition, they also help maintain the communal areas of the allotments; planting vegetables, flowers and trees, as well as general maintenance of the fencing and greenhouses.

In appreciation of all their hard work, Gordon and Mike collected an 'Outstanding Level Certificate' for the best maintained allotment at the 'It's Your Neighbourhood' ceremony in Stirling. Gordon was equally proud to receive an award for 'Best Volunteer Gardener of the Year' from the Allotment Society, with Mike receiving 'Best Overall Contribution' for his community involvement at the allotment.

Gordon was also awarded a Certificate of Accomplishment by Aberdeen City Council for his contribution to the community garden section of the city's first green flag park in Aberdeen's Duthie Park.



Stephen Wins Student of the Year

Huge congratulations to Stephen from Fraserburgh who won the prestigious '**Student of the Year**' award in his Introduction to Hospitality course, which he absolutely loved studying.

"I got to experience serving customers and making scones. I also made soups and got to prepare breakfast. That was part of my work placement which was in the kitchens at the college," Stephen explained.

In addition to working hard throughout the year, Stephen also volunteered at his local Fishermen's Mission kitchen and helped sell second hand items on a stall at college, raising over £200.

"It was an honour and fun to have worked with all my classmates and I am very proud of what I achieved."

Stephen from Fraserburgh



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



Two of our Support Workers, Anth and Sarah, were nominated for an important award.



Gordon from Aberdeen won 3 awards for great gardening.



Stephen from Fraserburgh won a special award for his cooking course.

Inspiring People

Some of this Year's Highlights...

Shining a Light on Dementia

Supporting individuals to live their lives the way they choose and to have control over the choices they make is at the very heart of everything we do at Real Life Options. We have been supporting Dawn from Redcar for over fifteen years and are enabling her to maintain her independence following a diagnosis of dementia in 2016.

Dawn is determined to be involved in everything connected with her condition and that included **running a personalised training session** for her support team and family members, which included a talk from Community Nurse Leanne Brittle to help people understand dementia better.

The highlight of the day was Dawn's presentation entitled 'My Feelings and Memories' which provided a very personal insight into how her life is changing, how she feels about this and the importance of retaining as much independence as possible.

Sarah Ryan, Supported Living Lead has been working extensively with Dawn over the last three years to help her manage the condition. The range of activities undertaken include simplifying Dawn's home and adding images to cupboard doors so that she can easily locate her belongings and introducing a rota board which identifies visiting support staff and any upcoming appointments.

To further maintain Dawn's independence, her team also produced a shopping book, containing pictures of Dawn's favourite foods and details of where they can be bought.



Dawn organised a talk to help people understand more about dementia.



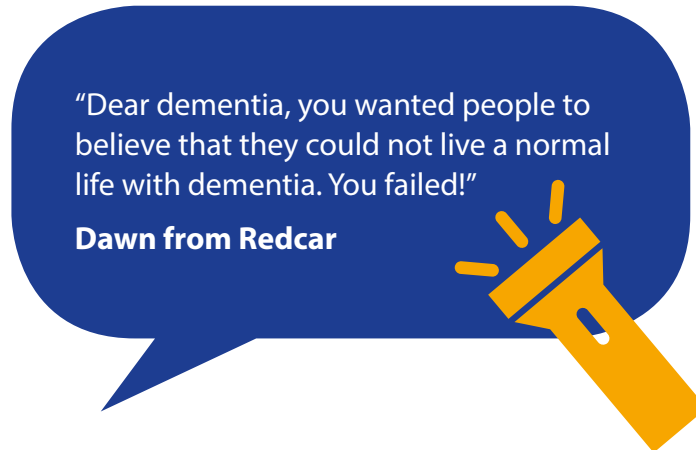
Dementia is an illness where some people, as they get older, get confused and forget things.



Angela and Beau ran an important interview to recruit new Board members.



Everyone listened to what they thought so they could choose the right people for the job.



Asking all the Right Questions

Being person-centred, values-driven and passionate about improving the lives of the people we support are essential qualities when inviting new people to join our organisation. So, it is fundamental that the **people we support are involved in the interview and recruitment process** for all staff.

When several candidates were interviewed to become Non-Executive Board members, Beau and Angela from Stockton-on-Tees, supported by Alan George and Ann Smith, were key members of the interview panel and were pivotal in selecting the right people for the job.

Angela is a very experienced interviewer and has lost count of the amount of times that she has been an interview panel member. Whereas, in comparison, the day marked Beau's first occasion as an interviewer, but he certainly rose to the challenge.



"The appointment process for Non-Executive Board members is just as rigorous as for senior staff," explained Chief Executive David Sargent. "Angela and Beau were very open and honest about the candidates, providing clear insights and strong evidence on the appointments which was incredibly valuable."



Inspiring People

Some of this Year's Highlights...

Making a difference

Nadine from Falkirk is a force to be reckoned with. She is bubbly, has a fantastic sense of humour and plenty of character. With support from her team, including Jenny White and Debbie Robertson, Nadine has **developed her own support plan** that caters for her particular interests and needs with hobbies that include art classes, bowling and music.

She also works tirelessly as a volunteer for the British Heart Foundation two afternoons a week. Initially, she was tasked with asking people if they wanted to buy a badge or a raffle ticket and her responsibilities have grown from there as she has gained more confidence and independence. "I like talking to people but didn't want to let the shop down if I didn't sell anything," she explained. Nadine's artistic flair comes in useful when displaying jewellery and organising the books on sale, which she really enjoys.

"It's important to be in the community. I used to be nervous but I feel more confident now."

Nadine from Falkirk



Les's Race Track Experience

Car enthusiast Les from Teesside jumped at the chance to celebrate his birthday in style, with an **exhilarating racetrack experience in a luxury car**. Together with Service Manager Leigh McCusker, Les travelled to Elvington, a former airfield on the outskirts of York. After enjoying lunch, they got to spectate as a Ferrari, Lotus and Aston Martin whizzed around the racetrack.

Initially, Les was apprehensive because of the noise and speed of the cars, but once his turn arrived, he climbed in without hesitation and enjoyed his high-speed passenger experience over three laps in a Porche 911.

"I loved it. I never thought I would get to ride in a car like that."

Les from Teesside



Andrew Leads the Way

Andrew from Redcar was delighted to get more involved volunteering for his local church, where he is a longstanding member, following his confirmation at 21 years old. Over the years he has made many good friends within the congregation, including Reverend Rebecca who offered him the chance to use his skills to help welcome others.

Andrew **supports the church as a 'Side Person'**; meeting and greeting people as they arrive, giving out the hymn books and service books. Another important role that Andrew enjoys is that of Crucifer at the Sunday Eucharist. This means that he carries the church's processional cross at the beginning and end of the service. Andrew would love to become Vicar one day and says, "Reverend Andrew sounds very good to me."

"Andrew is doing a great job and is always keen to help with a big smile."

Graham Brimble, Church Warden



Sensory Sensation in Scotland

Our Falkirk services celebrated Learning Disability Week in style, organising a wide range of **inclusive sensory-themed activities** that everybody could enjoy. In addition to an exciting trip to a local Sensory Centre, people were treated to relaxing foot, hand and head massages whilst listening to soothing music and a sensory storyteller shared some fantastic ideas with staff on how to create and tell person-centred stories.

Their home sensory room also received a brand new sensory box which provided a visually fun evening of glow-sticks, glow in the dark glasses and LED-lit balloons. The week was topped off with a delicious Italian-themed home-cooked meal and a celebratory Victoria Sponge.

"We support people of all different age groups, each with individual hopes and dreams, so when deciding on how to mark the occasion, it was important to choose activities that would be fully inclusive for all the people we support. With that in mind, we looked at sourcing and how to support participation in a variety of sensory activities within the home and in the community."

Tracey Monaghan, Team Coordinator



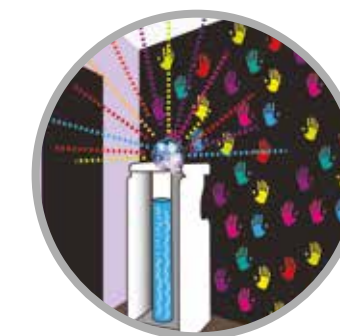
Nadine from Falkirk enjoys working in a British Heart Foundation shop.



Les from Teesside drove in a fast car on a racetrack for his birthday.



Andrew from Redcar enjoys helping at his church and carrying the big cross.



People from Falkirk had fun doing lots of different sensory activities.

Inspiring People

Some of this Year's Highlights...

Fun-tastic day raises over £350

Residents, neighbours, family and friends came together in Redcar to enjoy a **fun-packed day to raise money** for a cause close to their hearts. The event was planned after Neil from Redcar, having spent a long spell in hospital, asked that his friends help sick children by fundraising for the Children's Ward at James Cook University Hospital in Middlesbrough.

Weather conditions were ideal for an outdoor day of fun which included a delicious barbecue, entertaining games and a fabulous raffle and tombola. Over 60 people joined in the merriment and fundraising which generated over £350. Hungry guests appreciated the barbecue food, superbly cooked by members of Dawn's family and Rebecca's home-baked cake was a great success, as was fresh produce from Richard's allotment.

Martin kept the children entertained on the fun stalls; the stocks and wet sponges generated lots of laughter and provided some temporary respite from the heat for the willing victims. A special mention goes to Owen, son of support worker Kelly, who very kindly donated his childhood teddy for the 'Guess the Name' game; won by Maria who promises to take great care of the pre-loved bear.

"The generous support of fundraisers like you makes it possible for our hospital to help provide a level of patient care beyond which the NHS is able to fund."

South Tees Hospitals Charity



Thank You Card

Huge congratulations to Yvonne from Glasgow (supported by Kirsty Richmond) who was the worthy winner of our UK-wide Thank You Card competition.



Connecting with the Community

Our Leeds Outreach team have been making a big impression in their local community by hosting **a number of impressive fundraising events**, including a July 4th extravaganza which raised £193.

Based in a local park, over 100 people attended and enjoyed a wide range of exciting activities, from sports day style competitions (including egg and spoon, beanbag, running and walking races) to carnival games (including hook a duck, hoopla, a tombola and lucky dip). In addition, people were treated to bingo, craft activities, puzzles and a delicious lunch at the park café that enables people with learning disabilities to develop catering and retail skills.

As well as the people we support and staff teams, the event was also attended by representatives from the Search Agency Company who kindly donated £100 and members of the public, lots of whom walked away with recruitment materials after being inspired to look into a future career in social care.

"The event was a brilliant success in breaking down barriers and forging connections with the local community and other companies we work with. The range of activities was devised in response to what the people we support wanted to do and they were all really involved on the day itself too, especially Ruth who volunteered to help set up and run the tombola and lucky dip. It's been great to hear how much people enjoyed it and how they are already looking forward to the next event."

Anne-Marie Steyn, Team Coordinator



"I liked being with people like me and not being judged."
A person supported by St Anne's Community Services talking about the Leeds Outreach event

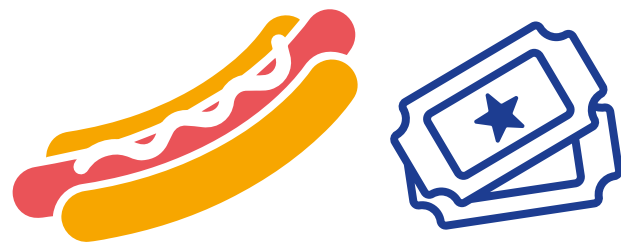
Useful and Kind Unlimited Partnership

At Real Life Options, we understand the importance of mentoring when supporting people to develop and prepare for the future. That's why we have been **working in partnership with Useful and Kind Unlimited**; an organisation that coaches young people to solve global problems in a human, sustainable and mindful way. At a summer school in York, an enthusiastic group of 16-18 year olds learnt about mindful leadership, culminating in a food kitchen prepared by the students with food donated by local businesses.

The students also visited the Houses of Parliament to tour the building, learning about its history and customs, taking part in a mock voting session and listening to several debates. Their visit to London ended in a presentation from Jim Blakemore of Bikeworks, a social enterprise that aims to make a positive difference to the lives of people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Bikeworks' Ability Clubs are an exemplar for other social enterprise groups fully embracing inclusivity.

"This was a really special experience and has given me a unique insight into how Parliament works."

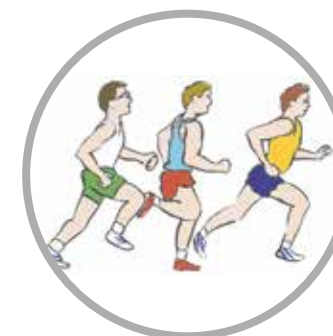
Student, Useful and Kind Unlimited



People in Redcar held a fun barbecue to raise over 350 pounds for their local hospital.



Yvonne from Glasgow won our Thank You card competition.



Our Leeds team raised 193 pounds by running a fun event in a local park with sports day races, carnival games and bingo.



Lots of young people have been learning more about how to make a difference.

Get Involved

Walking the West Highland Way

In memory of Scott who has sadly now passed away following a short illness.

Stretching 96 miles from Milngavie, north of Glasgow to Fort William near Ben Nevis, the West Highland Way is certainly not a route for the faint-hearted! Scott from Fife, together with Team Co-ordinator Rosie McArthur and Support Worker John Hartley, embarked on **an epic journey to complete the walk over five days and four nights**, raising funds through sponsorship for a sensory garden at Scott's home, which he shared with three other people.

To take on a challenge of this nature takes true grit and determination and Scott, a regular walker, was supported in building up his stamina, getting used to his new walking boots and buying suitable clothing.

Along the scenic route, Scott, Rosie and John were fortified with hearty breakfasts, energy-filled packed lunches (Scott particularly liked chomping on his Mars Bars) and appetising evening meals. Overnight accommodation varied, from a bunkhouse in Balmaha to a wigwam in Inverarnan; all new experiences for Scott. The paths were challenging at the best of times with some very steep and rocky sections but Scott, who is partially-sighted, didn't let this deter him; covering on average 19 miles each day.

Along the route, Scott diligently collected his West Highland Way 'passport' stamps, culminating with a Certificate of Achievement on completion and a celebratory dinner and pint of coke. Ultimately Scott raised an incredible £2,112 through kind donations, sponsorship and Gift Aid.

"We could see how much Scott enjoyed walking the West Highland Way by the contentment on his face and by how relaxed he was throughout the whole adventure. We are so very proud of Scott and what he achieved."

Rosie McArthur, Team Coordinator

£2,112 raised



Scott from Fife walked 96 miles on the West Highland Way.



Scott did really well and raised 2,112 pounds to help build a new sensory garden.

Fundraising Fun

Headed up by Service Manager Debbie O'Neill, our Fraserburgh team and the people they support have **raised in excess of £4,500 for their local sensory garden project**. This incredible fundraising success is the cumulative result of a number of fundraising activities, including Gordon's sponsored walk, car boot sales, selling handmade crafts and gifts, hosting games and raffles and putting on a family fun day at their local leisure centre complete with bouncy castles, craft stalls and plenty of tasty food and hot drinks.

"I'm incredibly proud of the whole team. The amount we have managed to raise in such a short space of time is nothing short of amazing. We're looking forward to seeing our sensory garden dream start becoming a reality in the very near future!"

Debbie O'Neill, Service Manager

£4,500 raised



A Marathon Event in Ambleside

Keld O'Shea **raised a brilliant £700 by running the Windermere Marathon** in memory of his late father, Kevin, who was supported by Real Life Options as he battled Alzheimer's in his later years.

"With the support of Real Life Options in the last few years, my dad was given **exceptional care from wonderful people**. This support enabled my mum to do a few things by herself and recharge her batteries. It also meant that my dad was cared for at home which was an environment he was happy in. I would like to thank each and every person provided by Real Life Options and Service Manager Dave Allan for helping us in obtaining the right levels of care and for ensuring that the teams were always in place."

Keld O'Shea, Relative of Kevin from Darlington



£700 raised

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



Keld ran a marathon in Windermere and raised 700 pounds.

Our Year in Review

This year has been one of transformational change for the Real Life Options Group, which has seen the Human Resources team restructured into two new support functions - the Employee Relationship Team and the Employee Support Centre, demonstrating a commitment from the Board and the Leadership Team to invest in attracting, retaining, and supporting our most valuable asset; our staff.

Employee Relationship Team

The Employee Relationship Team's primary function is to facilitate a working environment where staff feel appreciated and valued by identifying and implementing programmes that enhance job satisfaction, improve general wellbeing and support a working environment where people thrive. New initiatives this year include **Life Assurance (Death in Service) Cover** for all staff in addition to **Mediation Training** for line managers and senior personnel to hone their skills in building good relationships within their teams.



Employee Support Centre

The Employee Support Centre facilitates the recruitment and on-boarding of new staff in addition to responding to employee enquiries related to pay, leave entitlement and general conditions of employment. We are delighted to report that introducing **values-based screening and digitalising all documentation** has reduced the length of time from advertising a role to making a job offer from an average of 50 days to 28 days. Payroll personnel previously based in the Finance office now work alongside their Employee Support Centre colleagues, ensuring that any pay-related queries are quickly resolved.

Working Together for a Real Future

The Real Life Options Group's managers and future leaders attended an aptly named **Working Together for a Real Future** conference to learn about their role in the organisation's strategy. The Leadership Team shared their vision for the future, outlining the strategic themes and how innovation groups provide a vehicle for cross-organisational collaboration and ideas generation.

A series of presentations introduced a new way of working that significantly transforms the way we recruit and the way that staff learn and develop. In addition to the launch of Real Talk, an innovative new style internal communications channel, delegates heard how digital support plans and an investment in service development are improving and driving excellence in the way we provide support.

Sessions were highly engaging and interactive, with activities demonstrating the value of teamwork and synergy. Using an app based system, attendees at the Glasgow and Birmingham conferences were invited to share ideas, with participants voting for their favourite suggestions. The top three winners at each event received a congratulatory **Real Ideas** certificate and a token gift voucher. The conferences also provided an opportunity to recognise and celebrate a number of **Real Stars**, individuals who have displayed an outstanding values-based approach in the way they work.

Embedding our Strategy

Following the **Working Together for a Real Future** conferences, our Directors and Regional Heads of Operations met with operational managers and key staff to develop a strategy for implementing and communicating transformational change across their teams. Attendees were reminded of the key messages and the new systems that are improving the way we provide exceptional support and care.

With an emphasis on operational delivery, the Glasgow event focused on quality, the role of the Care Inspectorate and on developing a person-centred Outcomes Tool. The Leeds event prioritised embedding Active Support and Positive Behavioural Support across the services. Invitations to participate in a number of innovation working groups in support of organisation improvements were enthusiastically accepted by attendees.



Some of our staff have a special job. It is to support other staff at work when they need help.



Our staff are getting better and quicker at finding the right people to come and work with us.



Our staff have been working together in special teams to come up with good ideas for supporting people.



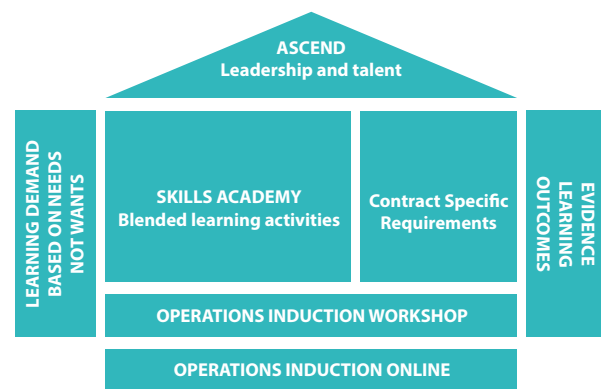
Staff who had the best ideas were given a certificate.

Our Year in Review

Introducing the Skills Academy

At our **Working Together for a Real Future** events in Glasgow and Birmingham, the Real Life Options Group introduced plans for a dynamic and exciting new way of learning under a **Skills Academy** banner. Moving away from participation-based learning, the Skills Academy is the collective home for a range of flexible learning and development pathways that are outcomes-focused. Modules are designed to enable people to take ownership of their own development by offering interactive and appealing courses that take into account people's different learning styles.

Our new person-centred way of learning will play a pivotal part in our charity's long-term future by ensuring that our employees have access to learning that is responsive, cost-effective and operationally efficient whilst equipping them with the skills to meet the needs of the people we support. The Skills Academy Innovation Group, comprising of employees from across our organisation were tasked with creating a suite of new modules. These are being tested by in-house 'pioneers' prior to formally rolling out the new look courses later in the year.



Managers are on the ASCEND

This year, the Real Life Options Group also launched **ASCEND**; our new leadership and talent management programme for leaders within the organisation. Held at the Railway Museum in York, the exciting two-day event was attended by managers from across the UK. As part of the Skills Academy, **ASCEND**, an acronym for **A**cquiring **S**kills, **C**ompetencies, **E**volving, **N**urturing and **D**evelopment, enables participants to enhance their skills in leadership and management by focusing on their personal growth and development. Ultimately by building people's confidence and providing the tools to effectively lead people, we aim to achieve excellent management in the provision of social support and care.

A number of interactive group activities and self-reflection encouraged participants to discuss the skills and attributes of great managers, identify their own key strengths and consider what impact they could bring to their teams, the wider organisation and the people we support.

"I'm incredibly proud of how everyone really joined in and contributed on the day...it marks the evolution of three years of hard work to get everything right. Feedback has been extremely positive and people are really looking forward to what the future holds."

Jill Hicks, Head of Talent Development

Supporting People to have a Strong Voice

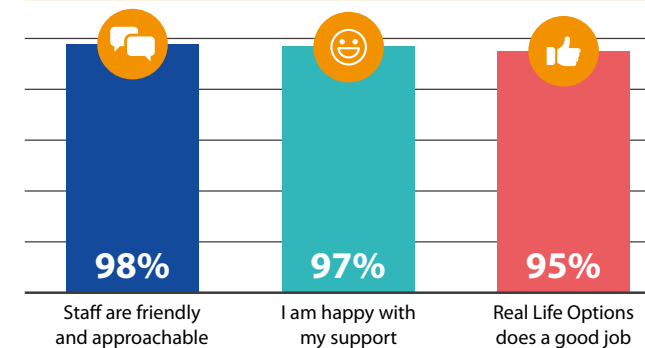
At Real Life Options, we support people to have a strong voice in the way they want to live their lives and so it is essential that we provide ample opportunities for individuals to let us know what they think and how they feel about the support they receive.

One of the ways that people can provide feedback about their support is by completing our EasyRead survey. The questionnaire was developed in consultation with individuals and their families and covers topics that are important to the person receiving support, such as choice and control, family and friends, health and happiness.

In our latest survey, 97% of respondents told us they are happy with the support they receive from Real Life Options. The full EasyRead version of the **People We Support Survey** report is available to download from our website.



Feedback from the People we Support



Real Talk

Real Talk is an exciting new app-based channel that has been developed to connect employees and share internal communications across the Real Life Options Group. The mobile application (app) is very similar in look and feel to existing social media platforms however unlike Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp, Real Talk is a safe and secure place for employees to share good news and best practice. The app is easily accessed from desktop or mobile devices and is being actively used by teams across the UK for sharing information in private team groups and as a virtual meeting place for innovation group members to develop ideas for improving the way we provide support.



Life Assurance Scheme

At the Real Life Options Group, it is important to us that our staff have access to benefits that make a positive difference to their health and wellbeing. Following the successful introduction of an Employee Assistance Programme that provides staff access to a wealth of advice; from legal matters and counselling to debt management and a 24-hour medical helpline, we are pleased to announce the launch of a new benefit that offers additional peace of mind. We now provide **Life Assurance (Death in Service) Cover** for all our support and administrative staff to the sum of £10,000 so, should the worst happen, those left behind will receive financial support.



We have a new way of helping our staff learn new skills in the way that is best for them.



Managers are learning how to be really good at supporting their teams. This is a new way of learning called ASCEND.



97 percent of people say that they are happy with their support from Real Life Options.



We have a new way for staff to share news through a phone app called Real Talk.

1st Homecare Year in Review

Putting Care At Home First

1st Homecare has been providing care at home services since 2004, joining forces with Real Life Options under the Real Life Options Group banner in 2014.

The company is now one of the major care providers in Scotland, significantly contributing to the wellbeing and quality of life of over 1,300 older people. This year, more than 360 staff delivered tailored support and care for people in the North East, South East, Central, West and South West Scotland.

Our ambition at the beginning of the financial year was to see 1st Homecare grow in terms of geographical spread and strengthen our position as a community care provider of choice. With new services in **Fife** and **East Ayrshire**, we are well on the way to achieving our goals. With efficient working and business sustainability in mind, we made the decision to cease service provision in Edinburgh to concentrate on other growth areas.

Through a series of leadership and development programmes and in partnership with our Real Life Options senior colleagues, we are embedding strong values and person-centred behaviours that underpin our culture and approach to delivering care at home support.



People Focused and Quality Led

In a desire to establish best-in-class care at home services, we have created roles that will support our staff to develop and thrive in a quality focused environment.

In 2019, we welcomed Desiree MacLennan as 1st Homecare Regional Operations Manager East. Desiree has extensive people-focused operational and customer service experience and an in-depth understanding of the regulatory governance of the Care Sector. She is passionate about supporting others to achieve their potential and in driving improvements that make a positive difference to the lives of the people supported by 1st Homecare. Desiree drives the strategic people agenda across the business in addition to overseeing the services in Aberdeen, Fife, Falkirk, Dumfries and Galloway.

We also welcomed Rosie Coutts as 1st Homecare Regional Operations Manager West. Rosie has extensive care at home experience and focuses on the delivery of exemplar support and care whilst ensuring that teams follow best practice and adhere to the Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice and National Care Standards. Rosie works with each team to improve quality, health and safety, and compliance through service audits, inspections and continuous improvement planning in addition to overseeing our services in Ayrshire.

Celebrating 20 years of Exceptional Care



At 1st Homecare, we are privileged to employ people who provide exceptional care at home support across Scotland. One such individual is Linda Donowho from Dumfries. Linda, who has been providing outstanding support for 20 years, was left speechless when her colleagues arranged a surprise party and gifts to mark the special occasion. Linda, who arrived at the office expecting to complete a training session, explained: "It is the first time anything like this has happened to me, so it was lovely to be appreciated in this way." Linda plans to continue working for 1st Homecare after reaching retirement age and attributes her loyal service to the good relationships and great friendships she has established with her teammates and the people she has supported over the years.

"Linda is a real asset to the team and a great role model and mentor for new staff. She has a fantastic sense of humour, is always laughing and smiling and is someone who puts others first. Celebrating her work anniversary in this way is the least we can do to thank her for her contribution and dedicated service."

**Julie Stuart,
Service
Manager**



Care Management System Pilot

To optimise staff safety and improve 'real time' call monitoring, 1st Homecare has been piloting **CM2000, an app-based care management system**, with a number of staff in the North Ayrshire area. Unlike traditional systems that rely on using the homeowner's own phone to log a care worker's arrival and departure, staff simply scan the app on their smart phone as they enter a person's home and again when they leave.

Not only is this more efficient, it is less intrusive for the person who lives in the property who may otherwise be using their house phone or where the handset might be out of order. The system facilitates improved communication and rota scheduling as any updates to appointments or staff cover is shared and communicated at the point of change.

The 1st Homecare team are delighted with the initial success of the pilot which is now being introduced into a further two areas. It is expected that the new care monitoring system will be in place across all 1st Homecare services before the end of the year.



1st Homecare supports older people in their own homes. More than 360 staff supported over 1,300 older people this year.



There are two people who have new jobs called Desiree and Rosie. They are in charge of making sure that staff do their jobs well.



Linda has worked at 1st Homecare for 20 years. Her friends surprised Linda with a party to say thank you.



We are trying out a new way to check that older people are getting support at the right time. It is called a care management system.

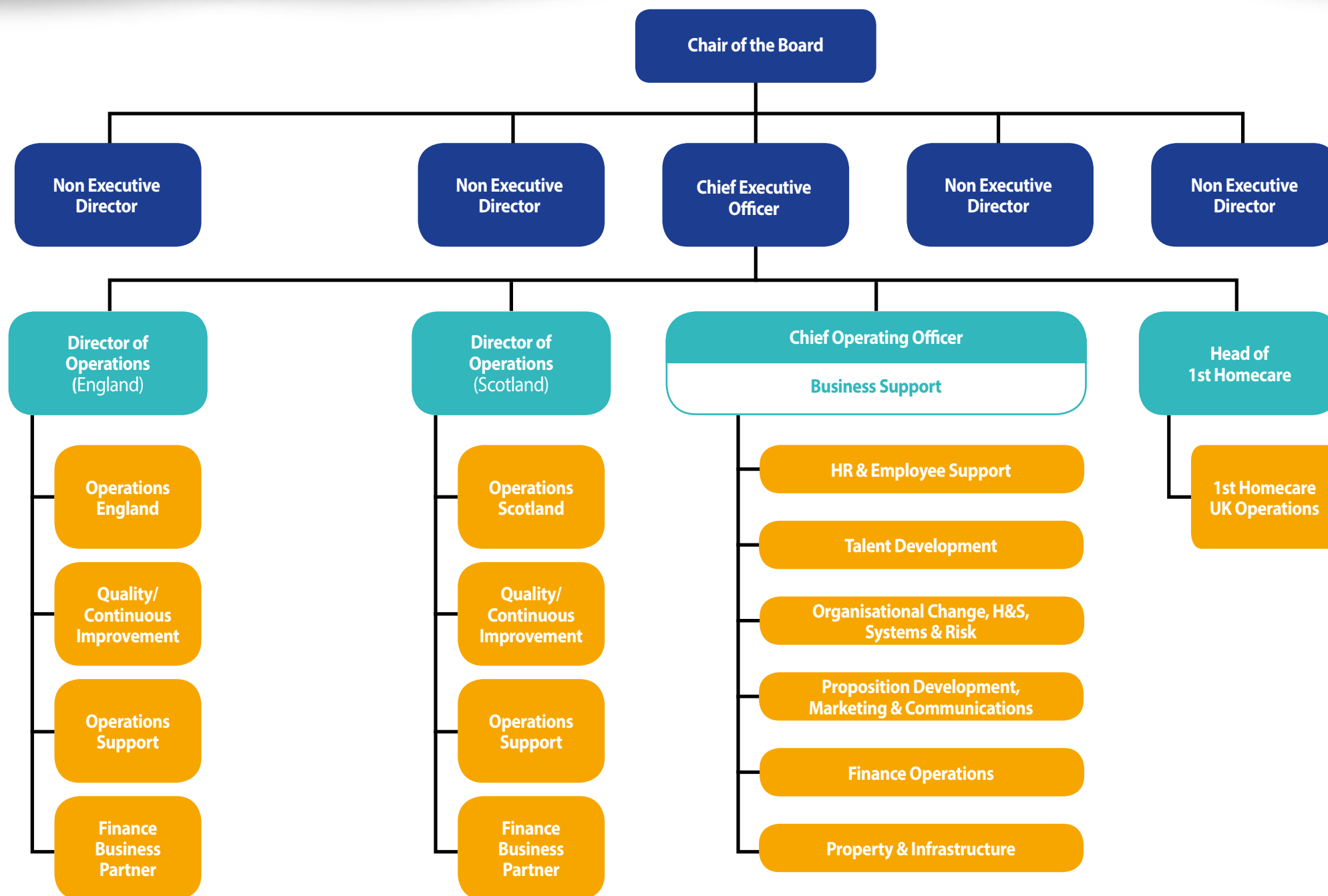
Our Team

Our Team

People are the cornerstone of everything the Real Life Options Group does and that goes for our staff as well as the people we support. This year **we restructured our business support teams** so they can better assist our operational teams to deliver exceptional support to people across the UK.

This change included the introduction of the **Employee Support Centre** who are responsible for recruitment and answering all employment-related queries, the **Employee Relationship Team** who oversee engagement and benefits and the **Talent Development Team** who coordinate ongoing training, inductions and the new Skills Academy and ASCEND development programme.

The Real Life Options Group is overseen by a Board of Directors, the Leadership Team and Heads of Operations who provide support to our committed teams of Service Managers, Team Coordinators and Support Workers.



The people who work at the Real Life Options Group 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.



We have changed how our teams work so they can help support people in the best way.



One change included the introduction of a new Employee Support Centre to look after our staff.

Our Finances

We are very pleased to report another successful year of growth with an **annual turnover of £44.4m**. This is an **increase of 6.3%** from the previous year of £41.8m which has been driven by growth in services including new supported living, care at home and outreach packages in Glasgow, Aberdeenshire, Warwickshire and East Ayrshire and South Tyneside.

These new services have contributed to an increasing shift in our service provision towards supported living and housing support, which has included transforming existing services with a corresponding reduction of our residential care provision as we endeavour to help the people we support live as independently as possible.

Fee levels have increased largely in response to the increase in the National Minimum Wage and Scottish Living Wage. Due to a focused effort on recruiting and retaining staff, there was a 22% reduction in the cost of agency staff this financial year.

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

For further information, the full accounts can be viewed on our website:

www.reallifeoptions.org

	2018-19 Total	2017-18 Total
Turnover	£44,491,000	£41,836,000
Expenditure	£44,015,000	£41,170,000
Net Incoming Resources	£476,000	£666,000
Reserves	£6,716,000	£6,240,000

Where We Work

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

Business Support Centre:

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

Tel: 01977 781800

www.reallifeoptions.org

Business Support Centre – Scotland:

Real Life Options,
Suite 1, Ground Floor,
Academy House
1346 Shettleston Road
Glasgow G32 9AT

Tel: 0141 471 8146

1st Homecare Ltd Registered Office:

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

Tel: 01383 842947

www.1sthomecare.co.uk



Last year, we were paid 44.4 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.



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



Business Support Centre:

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



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). RLO019