

# Real News

Issue 104



## Learning Disability Awards

National Award Recognition for our Support Workers

New Annual Roadshow for our Staff

Shining a Light on Dementia Training

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



# National Learning Disability Awards Success

**Anth and Sarah are honoured for their outstanding contribution to social care**

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' award and Sarah Ryan, Supported Living Lead in Redcar was a national finalist in the 'Making a Difference' category.

*"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."*

**Sarah Ryan, Supported Living Lead**



The National Learning Disability and Autism Awards celebrate great quality support and care.



Another one of our Support Workers, Sarah, was nominated for the Making a Difference Award.



One of our Support Workers, Anth won an important award for being one of the best Support Workers in the UK.



Anth and Sarah were very happy about the awards and said thank you for being nominated.

# Real Life Options Hits the Road

Exciting national roadshows unite an empowered staff team for the future.

Over 140 employees from across the Real Life Options Group came together in the first week of October to be inspired at our national roadshow conferences themed around 'Making Real Progress Together'.

Helmed by the Leadership Team, the roadshows in Leeds and Glasgow provided the ideal opportunity to empower and enthuse operational staff teams from across the UK and lay the foundations for real collaborative work across the organisation.

Following a powerful opening from Directors of Operations Vivien Simon (England) and Jean Trench (Scotland) which outlined our roadmap to



*"The roadshows were a fantastic way to really praise and reinvigorate our courageous staff teams so they feel empowered."*

David Sargent, Chief Executive

achieving 'best-in-class' operational excellence, attendees heard about an exciting new community investment fund initiative and progress with the organisation's volunteer strategy.

Colleagues heard a business update from Ian Hardcastle, Chief Operating Officer, which included welcome news that our pioneering ASCEND leadership programme is being rolled out to some Team Coordinators.

Our innovative new model of support was officially launched at the roadshows which was very well received by staff and the Team Awesome Awards which recognised outstanding contributions from staff across the UK.



Lots of staff from Real Life Options met together in Leeds and Glasgow for a roadshow.



The leaders talked about how to support people better and what other teams are doing to help this.



The leaders of the company explained how we can work together even better in the future.



They also talked about exciting new training called ASCEND and some staff got awards for doing a great job.



# Shining a Light on Dementia

## Dawn organises special training session to educate her staff about 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 supported Dawn from Redcar for over fifteen years and enabled 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.

*"Dear dementia, you wanted people to believe that they could not live a normal life with dementia. You failed!"*

*Dawn from Redcar*



Sarah Ryan, Supported Living Lead has worked 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 to buy them.



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.



She did a presentation called My Feelings and Memories to explain how she feels.



Dawn's staff are helping her to stay as independent as possible so she can stay in control of her own choices.

# It's all GO in Glenrothes

## Inclusive People We Support Forum encourages collaboration in Scotland

The people supported by the Real Life Options Glenrothes Outreach team are delighted with their new style GO Forum, where the ethos is: led by the people, driven by the team, management enabled.

Staff are keen to ensure that the GO Forum evolves and continues to be centred on the people they support. With this in mind, Team Coordinator Stephen Gell arrived at the latest Forum with a clear purpose, to find out what people really want and how they prefer to be supported. A lively discussion followed, generating some significant feedback.

*The GO Forum would like to thank their local Taekwondo Centre for providing the venue and val for the delicious unicorn cupcakes.*

GO Forum members shared that they prefer being referred to as a 'person supported' rather than 'service user' and they prefer to say 'my team' rather than use the term 'support worker' or 'staff'. Attendees also agreed that they would like 'their team' to get better at communicating change.

The support team welcomed the group's candid feedback and left the meeting with plenty to think about. Attendees appreciated the opportunity to have their views heard; confident that their opinions will drive change.

The GO Forum meets regularly with attendees and staff looking forward to a variety of animated sessions to plan future activities, including a possible 'Come Dine With Me' event.



The People We Support in Glenrothes are part of a new GO Forum.



The GO Forum is a meeting where the people we support and staff share ideas.



The people we support have said they prefer not to be called 'service users' and prefer to say 'my team' instead of staff.



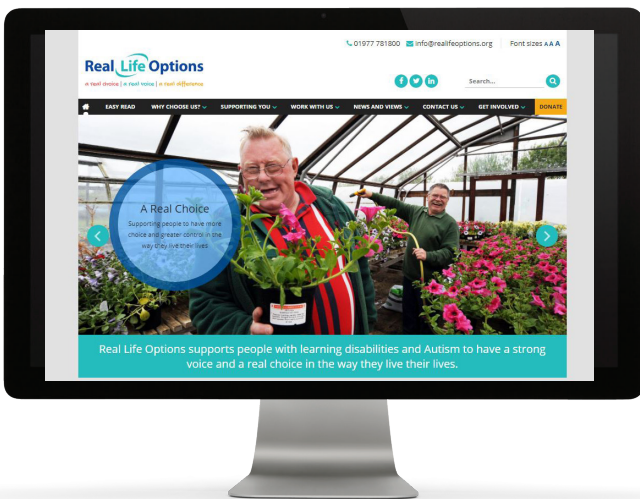
The ideas from the forum are shared with different people to help make changes and get their views heard.

# Launch of our New Website

We are delighted to announce the official launch of our brand-new website

The new comprehensive site features a streamlined, modern design, improved navigation and functionality and easy access to a wealth of information that caters for multiple visitors, including job seekers, local commissioners and the people we support.

Created with the user experience in mind, the site is fully optimised for use on mobiles and tablets, meaning that it can be easily navigated through a multitude of devices. There are quick links from the home page to CQC and Care Inspectorate reports, current vacancies and company information.



[www.reallifeoptions.org](http://www.reallifeoptions.org)

The new site is also much easier and quicker to navigate and has been designed on a dynamic WordPress platform that provides the flexibility to make future updates as we continue to develop and grow. A new EasyRead section provides accessible information for people with learning disabilities, and the Browse Aloud and adaptable font size features allow the site to be customised for people with visual impairments.

Going forward, the website will be updated on a regular basis with fresh new content, so visitors can stay informed about all the latest news, achievements and great fundraising projects going on across the organisation.

*"With a fresh look and feel, our new website has been designed to offer a more intuitive, user-friendly experience and allows easy navigation through a range of information."*

*David Sargent, Chief Executive, Real Life Options.*



Real Life Options now has a brand new website which people can look at.



A website is a place online where people can go to find out more information about something.



The new website is much more colourful and modern, so it is better to look at and easier to use.



You can visit the website by using a phone, tablet or a computer.



# Rebekah meets Scotland's First Minister

## Rebekah attends a prestigious 'Who Cares?' Scotland celebratory event

Many congratulations to Rebekah from Falkirk who recently attended a prestigious 'Who Cares?' Scotland celebratory event. The occasion was held to recognise the magnificent achievements of care experienced people in 2019. It was a proud day for Rebekah who received a National Certificate in Animal Health Care, marking her achievement, dedication and success.

The event was engaging and fun, with a DJ, a light buffet and a special guest - Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's First Minister. Rebekah invited her support worker Kelly to accompany her to the event. Both ladies really enjoyed the celebrations and were very happy to meet and chat with Nicola. Rebekah looks forward to continuing her studies and to developing her skills and learning in animal health care.



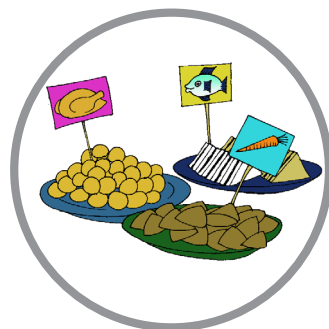
Rebekah from Falkirk went to an important event in Scotland called 'Who Cares?'



Rebekah and her Support Worker, Kelly, met Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's First Minister.



Rebekah got a National Certificate in Animal Health Care at the event.



Everyone had a really good time and enjoyed eating all the food and listening to the music by the DJ.

# Paula's Bridal Dress Dream Comes True

## Paula is treated to an amazing bridal style makeover

Paula from Leeds recently had an amazing experience courtesy of Claire and the staff at The Bridal Emporium. Paula, who loves to dress up, called in to the shop with her support worker Helen to admire the beautiful wedding dresses on display.

When Claire, the owner, invited her to try on one of the dresses together with a sparkling tiara, Paula was over the moon. The shop staff and other bridal dress shoppers were so welcoming and friendly, treating Paula like a princess. To complete this wonderful treat, Paula received a bridal style makeover by a professional make-up artist.



*"Helen is always planning exciting activities for the people she supports and really puts their choices at the heart of everything she does."*

*Joanne Stringer, Service Manager*

Service Manager Joanne Stringer has nothing but praise for Paula's Support Worker Helen and says, "Helen is always planning exciting activities for the people she supports and really puts their choices at the heart of everything she does."

A big thank you to everyone at The Bridal Emporium for making Paula's fairy-tale dream come true.



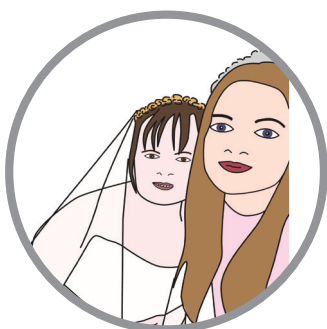
Paula from Leeds loves to dress up and got to wear a beautiful wedding dress at a shop.



Paula looked really beautiful in her wedding dress and had a great time trying it on.



The shop staff also gave Paula a makeover using lots of new make up.



The shop owner Claire was friendly and made Paula and Helen feel welcome and included.



# Connecting with the Community

Leeds Outreach team host a a number of impressive fundraising events

Based in a local park, over 100 people attended the most recent Leeds extravaganza which raised £193. Everyone 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.

*"I liked being with people like me and not being judged."*

A person supported by St Anne's Community Services

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," explained Anne-Maire Steyn, Team Co-ordinator. "The range of activities were 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."



The Leeds Outreach team have been busy organising lots of different events to raise money.



Over 100 people came to the charity event, including the people we support, their families and staff.



Their last event was a sports day with races and lots of fun games. It raised £163 in donations.



Everybody had a really good time and people we support enjoyed all the different activities.

# Packing all the Right Punches

## Paige embraces getting involved in Boxercise classes at her local gym

Paige from Sheffield certainly has a spring in her step and an awesome right hook which she has been showing off at local Boxercise classes.

“She really loves boxing and enjoys seeing her Support Workers get involved in the action as well. It’s great to see Paige really grow in confidence and come out of her shell,” explained Amanda Maquade, Service Manager. “We’ve been supporting Paige since October 2018 and after a recent break due to illness, she suggested the boxercise classes as an ideal way to start building up support again.”

Putting an emphasis on mental health benefits as well as physical fitness, the instructors Bill and Sonia always ensure social inclusion in their classes, and that includes pairing Paige up with different people in the class while her Support Worker is being put through their paces nearby too! In addition to pad work and bag work, there



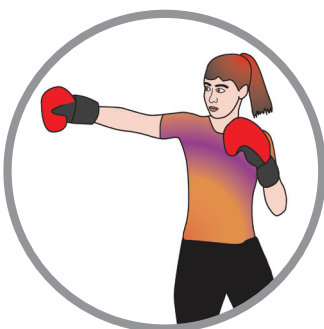
are a series of aerobic exercises and Paige has the option of having some time-out in the boxing ring if it ever becomes too overwhelming for her.

Recently, the instructors even presented Paige with a free pair of boxing gloves to encourage her to keep coming back and are really impressed with how well she is doing, especially with her great stance.

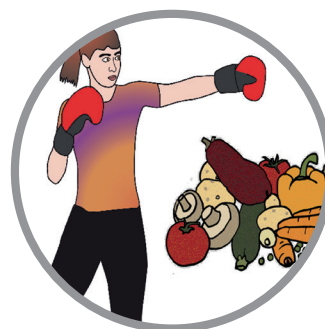
“Paige is really engaged during the whole session and everyone has commented on how happy she is afterwards,” said Amanda Maquade.

*“I accompanied Paige to one of the first classes and can confirm it’s a very intensive all-round workout!”*

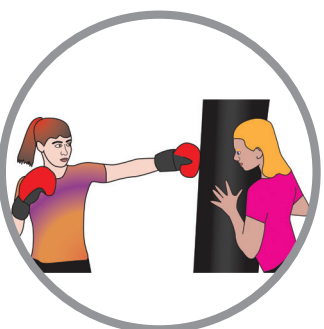
*Amanda Maquade, Service Manager*



Paige from Sheffield has been learning how to box in boxercise classes.



Boxing is really good exercise to help people stay fit and healthy.



She really loves boxing and enjoys seeing her Support Workers learn how to box with her.



Boxing has been making Paige feel really happy.

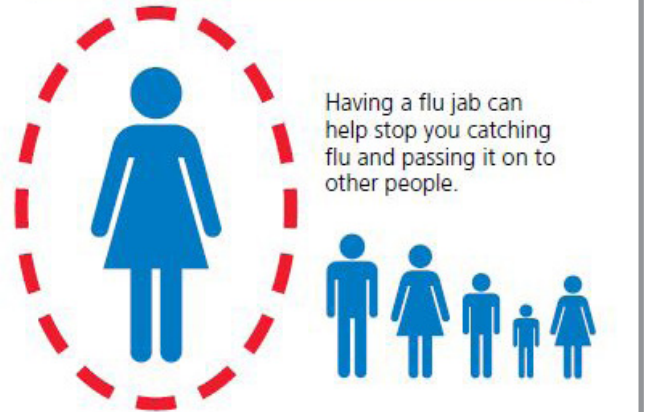
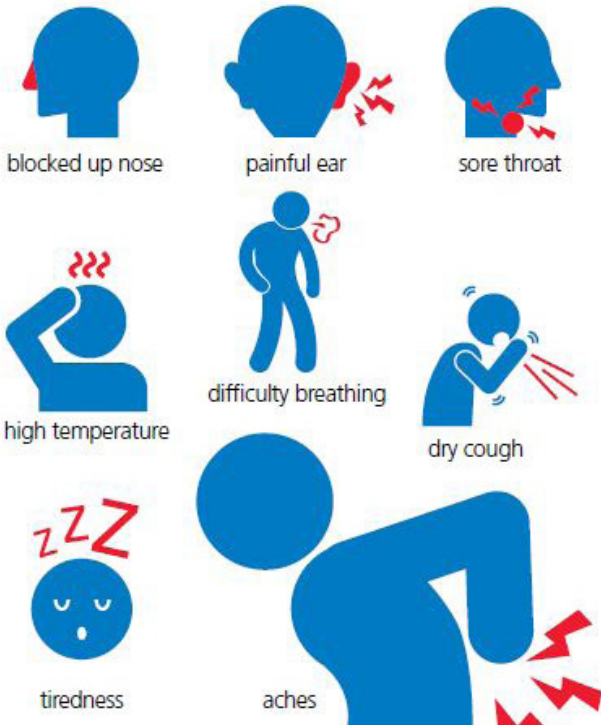


# Get your FREE flu jab

## Free flu jabs for people with learning disabilities and support workers

Flu can be a serious illness and can even mean you might need to go to hospital if you get very ill. That's why **the NHS provides FREE flu jabs to people with learning disabilities**. Here is what to expect when you go and get your jab which will help you stay fit and healthy. And remember **the NHS offers free flu jabs to all frontline health and social care workers too**.

### Here are the signs of flu



The flu jab is an injection in your arm usually given to you by a nurse at your doctors.



The best time to have a jab is in the **autumn**.

You need a jab every year as flu can change each year.



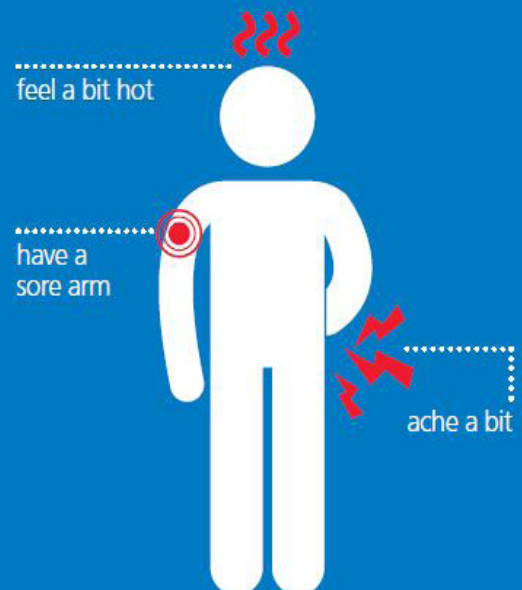
### Who else should have a flu jab?

People who care for you should have a flu jab so they don't get ill.



### Will the jab make me feel ill?

After a flu jab you may:



But do not worry, if you do feel ill, it will go away in a few days.

# Art Competition!

Show off your best art picture

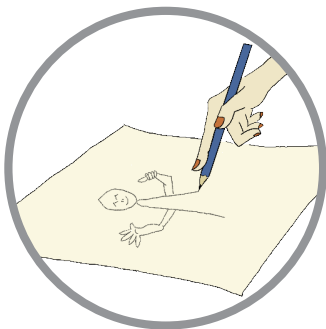


**WIN  
£50!**

We would love for the people we support to **share their best art picture** (painting, drawing, or montages). **The winner will receive £50.** There will be certificates of participation provided for everyone who enters.

The competition deadline is **9th February 2020.**

Send your entry (or a photo of your entry) to Sam Goodwin.  
**Email:** [samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org](mailto:samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org) **Post:** Real Life Options,  
David Wandless House, A1 Business Park, Knottingley, WF11 0BU



This competition is for the **best art picture** (painting, drawing or montage).



Send your entry or a **photo of your entry** to Sam Goodwin by email: **samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org**



**The winner will get £50 prize money.** And everyone who enters will get a certificate.



Or post it to Sam Goodwin, Real Life Options, David Wandless House, A1 Business Park, Knottingley, WF11 0BU.



# We Would Love To Hear Your News!

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

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

If you're a staff member with news to share or a person we support who would like to get involved **we'd love to hear from you.**

Whether it's sharing your artwork, photographs and recipes or writing poetry, film reviews, gardening tips or even writing your own article, nothing is too small!

Whether it's a painting you're particularly proud of, your best chocolate cake recipe or a film review, **please do get in touch with Sam or Sharon.**



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Sam and Sharon write this Real News Magazine for people to read.



You can tell Sam and Sharon your story by emailing or phoning them using the details above.



They like to include lots of stories from staff and the people we support.



You can also share your artwork, recipes, photographs and writing.