

Real News

Issue 106

Sharing Hope and Positivity

An array of rainbows and good
news stories from across the UK

Using
Technology to
Keep Connected

Launch of the
Community
Connections Fund

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

Sharing Hope And Positivity Rainbows

An array of rainbows and thank you posters from across the UK

A huge thank you to everyone who is displaying beautiful artwork in their windows and their gardens in support and appreciation of those who work in the NHS, in the social care sector and in other key worker roles. Your posters and colourful rainbows have cheered up passers-by no end at a time when people have stayed at home to do their part in reducing the spread of the COVID-19 virus.



Staff in Montrose



Team effort in Leeds



Michael, Julian, Norman, Diane, Helen and Tracy in Saltburn



Teamwork in Hartlepool



Vicky in Newcastle



Teamwork in Stockton

Richard in Newcastle



Gerald, Stephen and Richard in Livingston



Connor in Montrose



Friends in Montrose



Teamwork in Falkirk

Reece



Catriona in Glasgow



Amy and Chloe in Glenrothes



Friends in Redcar



Joseph in Montrose



Housemates in Hartlepool



Isaac in Montrose



Mary in Fraserburgh

Using Technology To Keep Connected

Finding new ways to spend time with friends whilst social distancing



A group of friends in Redcar are not letting COVID-19 get in the way when it comes to looking after their health and wellbeing by remaining busy and active whilst staying at home.

With a little help from their support team, and the aid of a popular video app, James, David and Stephen together with Lilian, Charlotte and Bev have produce their very own 'Toilet Roll Pandemic' video to entertain each other and their friends, despite living in two separate houses.

David, James, Stephen and Lilian are making the most of online keep-fit videos with Joe Wicks being a firm favourite. With help from Support Worker Sammy, regular sessions are set up where, using ipads, they can see each other exercising together, albeit in different houses.

The use of technology has been fantastic for keeping the friends connected whilst they are unable to spend time together socially. Similarly, the housemates have been supported to have FaceTime calls with their families and friends which has been so important for keeping their spirits up whilst staying at home.

"I am so proud of how well everyone is doing and how staff have supported people to learn new ways to keep in touch. They all loved making the video and seeing each other on screen. I can't wait to see what they will come up with next."

Leigh McGusker, Service Manager.



Friends in Redcar have been making videos and using ipads to keep in touch.



The friends made a video called Toilet Roll Pandemic. You can watch this video on our website.



The friends have been keeping fit by exercising. They have used ipads so that they can see each other.



Face Time

The friends have been using Face Time. Face Time is an app where people can see each other and talk to each other.

Grow And Learn Roots Achievement

Paul is delighted to receive his certificate from TV Presenter Carol Baxter

To say that Paul from Macduff has green fingers would be an understatement. Paul has spent the last twelve months taking part in a garden project achieving a Grow and Learn Roots course certificate from the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society.

"Paul has worked really hard at getting his award and we are all understandably very proud of his achievements."

Forbes Sutherland, Team Coordinator



As part of the course, Paul completed a workbook to record his activities, learning and skills. This included the key aspects of horticulture such as planting, garden

maintenance, growing fruit and vegetables, greenhouse work as well as passing a certificated course on the use of mowers and trimmers.

During the project, Paul had responsibility for looking after eight hens and was involved in all aspects of their care: feeding, egg collection, keeping the hen houses clean and ensuring that the hens were physically well.

Paul, pictured with Carol Baxter (pre-lockdown), a presenter of The Beechgrove Garden TV programme, is delighted with his achievement and looks forward to starting the second level course when classes resume.



Paul from Macduff has been doing a course to learn about plants and gardening.



Paul learnt how to use gardening machines and how to grow plants in a greenhouse.



Paul learnt how to look after hens. He knows how to feed them and how to collect their eggs.



At the end of the course, Paul was given a certificate by Carol Baxter. Carol is a TV presenter.

Launch of the Community Connections Fund

An exciting new initiative to support local projects for local people

"The launch of the community Connections Fund sits perfectly with our aim to invest in our local communities."

At the last annual conference, the Real Life Options Group introduced an exciting new initiative aimed at assisting operational teams and the people they support to build great connections within their communities.

The aptly named Community Connections Fund is a £65,000 pot of money set aside to support sustainable projects initiated and led by staff and the people they support.

Allocations from the fund are managed by a panel, comprising of support staff, coordinators, managers and business support personnel, who review applications, monitor spend and support successful project delivery.

If you have a great project idea that could benefit from the Fund, please speak to your local Real Life Options Service Manager.



"We look forward to seeing ideas such as proposals for a sensory garden or a social café come to fruition in the future, generating positive outcomes for the people we support."
David Sargent , CEO



Real Life Options has a new fund. It is called the Community Connections Fund.



The fund is worth sixty five thousands pounds. People can apply for some of the money to support good ideas.



Good ideas could be to start a social cafe or make a lovely garden. Ideas should help people get to know each other better.



Some staff members look after the money in the fund. Their job is to check that the money will be spent in a good way.

First Responder Supports Local Community

Matthew answered the call to become a Community Response Volunteer

For many people, 2020 will be a year etched into our memories for lots of different reasons, not least for the kindness of strangers. During the last few months, whilst the government has asked those at risk from COVID-19 to shield at home, individuals have been reliant on their neighbours and others in their local community to support them with some of the essentials of everyday life such as food shopping and collecting medication.



"Many of the people I help are elderly and isolating so sometimes I might be the only face they see that day. They really appreciate the support they receive and enjoy the opportunity to chat with someone which is great for everyone's mental health and wellbeing. Seeing how much this means to people makes it all worthwhile."

been asked to socially distance and stay at home, Matthew has joined a growing army of volunteers and donated more than 1,000 hours as a Community Response Volunteer, providing a lifeline service for vulnerable people. When not delivering food and medication to people's homes, Finance Officer Matthew also helps transport essential equipment and supplies between hospitals and medical centres.

Since 2016, Real Life Options' Matthew Allen has been a Volunteer First Responder with the Yorkshire Ambulance Service, reacting to life threatening 999 calls. Whilst people have

If you would like to know more about the role of NHS Volunteer Responders in your local community, please visit <https://www.goodsamapp.org/NHS>.



Matthew works for Real Life Options. He looks after money for some of the people we support.



In his free time, Matthew is a volunteer for the National Health Service.



Sometimes Matthew drives an ambulance and helps people who need to go to hospital.



Matthew helps people who are staying at home. He delivers their shopping and goes to the chemist for them.

Derek Is Making Great Strides

Through determination and hard work, Derek is walking again



When Derek first moved into his new home in Glasgow five years ago, very few people, including Derek himself, thought he would ever walk again. As a result of an accident, Derek sustained a brain injury and consequently was unable to walk or bear any weight. After a considerable amount of time in a rehabilitation unit, the opinion was that nothing more could be done to improve his mobility.

On arrival at his new home, Derek could not walk and relied on a wheelchair for mobility,

requiring full staff support for his everyday needs. Over the last four years, Real Life Options staff have worked tirelessly with Derek, supporting him with daily exercises and keeping his spirits up when he felt down. Slowly but surely, through determination and hard work, Derek's mobility improved.

Derek now has greater independence to get on with his life. He can walk with the aid of a rollator and requires minimal support for his everyday needs. His confidence has grown in leaps and bounds to the extent that he has joined new clubs and is trying out new activities. Needless to say, Derek has a great relationship with his support team who have worked so hard to help him achieve so much and says, "I love it here. The staff are brilliant."

*"We are all so proud of how far Derek has come thanks to the hard work and determination of Derek and his support staff."
Fiona McBill, Team Coordinator.*



A long time ago Derek had an accident which hurt his head and his brain.



After the injury, Derek could not walk and needed to use a wheelchair.



Support staff worked with Derek to help him walk. He worked really hard and can now walk again.



Derek can do more of the things he enjoys. He has joined new clubs and is trying new activities.

Recognising and rewarding outstanding Individuals across the organisation

Earlier this year we officially relaunched the Real Heroes Awards, which recognise and reward outstanding individuals across the Real Life Options Group.

We are delighted to share the official summary of the first round. It makes for heart-warming reading and it's great to hear about all the amazing things going on across the organisation. This round's Real Heroes are:

- Mark Jukic - Stockton-on-Tees**
- Anne Wood/Joanne Black - Glenrothes**
- Scott Edwards - Glasgow**
- Gary Ford - Glasgow**
- Longstone Team - Edinburgh**
- Maureen Sills - Knottingley**

To nominate someone for a Real Hero award, all you need to do is complete a short nomination form and give this to your Service Manager or Head of Operations (for service nominations) or email samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org (for Business Support nominations). You can request a nomination form from your Manager or Sam.

All nominations should provide an answer to two basic questions:

- Why is the person a Real Hero? e.g. What are they doing to go above and beyond what is expected of them?
- What difference have they made? e.g. to the people we support, staff team, the organisation or the local community.



We have a way of thanking people for the good things they do. It is called the Real Heroes Awards.



Anyone can name a staff member or someone supported by the Real Life Options Group for an award.



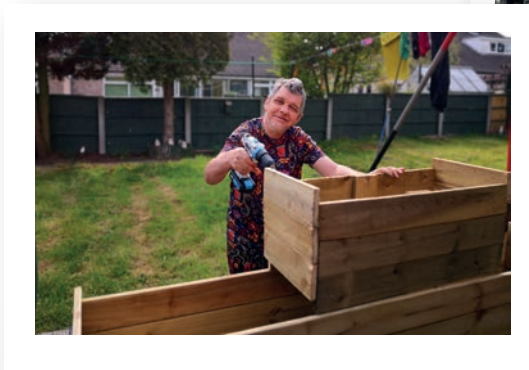
We want people to tell us why the person should get an award and what they do that is so special.



To name someone for an award, email samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org to send you a form.

Sowing Seeds And Making Planters

Nigel's garden and his planter is 'blooming' lovely!



"I've not decided yet if I want to grow vegetables or flowers in the planting box."

Not one to sit still for long, Nigel from York is making excellent use of his time staying at home by designing, creating and building a beautiful wooden planter.

Nigel normally volunteers at a church café during the week, but like many, he is observing the government's instructions to socially distance so instead he is enthusiastically pursuing his other big interest – gardening!

Over the last few weeks, Nigel has been busy potting seeds in his greenhouse ready to set out in the garden during the warmer months. When asked the question, Nigel says, "I've not decided yet if I want to grow vegetables or flowers in the planting box."

Whatever he decides to do, we're sure it will be a 'blooming' success.



Nigel lives in York. He usually volunteers at a church cafe.



When the government asked people to stay at home, the cafe closed.



Nigel loves gardening. He has been sowing seeds and making a wooden planter.



Nigel has a hard choice to make. Should he grow flowers or vegetables in his planter?

Lockdown Haircuts and a Lick of Paint

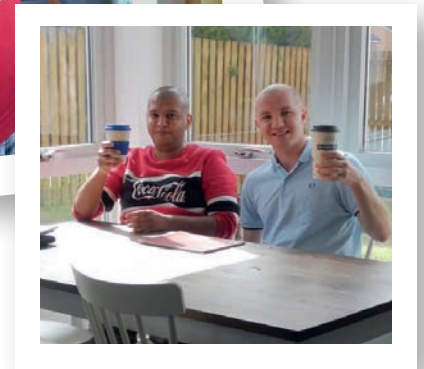
Being creative and stylish while staying at home

Adi and Mark in Glasgow are really making the most of staying in by giving their home a big makeover with help from their support staff. Armed with brushes and paint pots, they have been busy transforming their living space.

The kitchen and bathroom have received new coats of paint and the friends have rearranged their lounge furniture for a fresh new look. Housemates Adi and Mark explain: "We really enjoyed deciding on the paint colour and where we wanted to put our furniture."

A small couch now sits in the dining area of the kitchen. The friends plan on buying a small coffee table and would like some new flooring to complete what is now a comfortable space to relax and one where they can chat with each other and their support team.

Not only has their house been transformed, but Adi and Mark are sporting new lockdown haircuts too, joining the many thousands of people around the UK. Not fazed by the 'staying at home' haircut, Adi says, "I think we both look cool."



"We really enjoyed deciding on the paint colour and where we wanted to put our furniture."



Adi and Mark have been making some big changes in their home.



Adi and Mark have been painting some of the walls. They enjoyed choosing the paint colour.



Adi and Mark have been moving the furniture around. They now have a small couch near the kitchen.



Adi and Mark have been changing the way they look. They both have new haircuts.

Feeling Great After Losing Weight

Angela is so happy to have achieved her weight loss goal

Angela from Stockton-on-Tees is feeling fantastic after losing over two and a half stone in weight. After suffering with a painful knee for some time, Angela decided at her last person-centred review to see if losing weight would make a difference.

To help with her weight loss, Angela joined Slimming World and has been trying different food options with chicken curry with rice and pumpkin soup as firm favourites.

Angela set herself a target of twelve months to lose the weight. Not only did she achieve her target weight of two stone within ten months, she went on to lose another seven pounds.

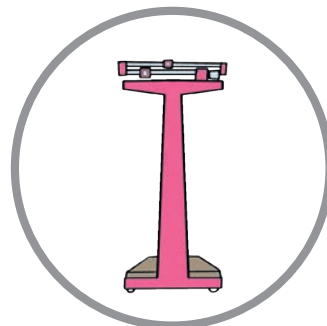


"I feel fantastic and would encourage anyone to start Slimming World if they want to lose weight."

Angela, Stockton-on-Tees



Angela from Stockton-on-Tees has had a sore knee for a long time.



Angela said at her person-centred review that she would like to lose some weight.



Angela went to Slimming World and by eating healthy food, lost two and a half stone.



Angela feels fantastic after losing weight. Her knee does not hurt her anymore.

A Thank You Message from David

A personal message from the Board of Trustees on World Health Day

World Health Day this year honoured the contribution of nurses and other health workers who have been at the frontlines of COVID-19 response, putting their own health at risk to protect the broader community.

To coincide with this deserved recognition, Chair David Wilkin on behalf of the Board of Trustees shared his praise and thanks to the Real Life Options Group staff.

"I'm incredibly proud how well the organisation has responded to the pandemic. In recent

years, there has been a steady investment in technology which has facilitated the smooth transition to remote working in addition to keeping staff connected and up-to-date.

"Our front line staff are doing an amazing job by staying positive and continuing to provide the very best support possible.

"They are adhering to the government's guidelines on social distancing and the use of PPE whilst enabling the people they support to keep themselves safe too."



"On behalf of the Board, I would like to commend and applaud everyone for their dedication and professionalism in these unprecedented times."

Your continued commitment, determination and the substantial efforts you make to continue supporting people in our local communities will not be forgotten. Thank you."



One of our Trustees is called David. His job is to make sure that Real Life Options does good things.



David wants to say thank you to everyone who works at Real Life Options.



Some people have been working from home. They have a computer and a phone to help them do their job.



David is proud that our staff have been doing what the government says to keep people safe.

Easter Competition Results!

Fantastic submissions from lots of talented and creative people

A massive thank you to all the people we support across the UK who sent a submission for our national Easter Competition. We asked people to share their best Easter artwork (painting, drawing, craft, montage or colouring in) and have been very impressed by the entries received.

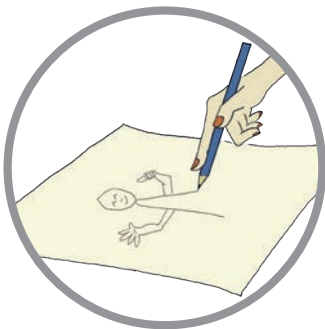
The standard this year was extremely high and with almost 60 submissions to choose from, we enlisted the support of our 2000 strong workforce to assist with the judging process. The votes have been counted and we are delighted to announce the results.

Many congratulations to **Alan, Maureen and Helen from Newcastle** who joined forces to create a selection of Easter crafts, winning first place and a £50 prize.

A deserving second place is awarded to **Bobby from Angus** for his cheerful Easter chick card who wins £25 for his efforts.

Third place goes to **Janet from Hartlepool** for her beautifully decorated eggs in a box, earning her a £10 prize. Well done!

A certificate has been sent to everyone who submitted an entry to thank them for taking part.



This competition was for the best Easter picture, craft or colouring in.



Alan, Maureen and Helen won the competition. They got £50 prize money and a certificate.



Everyone who entered the competition received a certificate.



Send your good ideas for the next competition by email to sharon.mccutcheon@reallifeoptions.org or call 01977 781385.

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.**

It could be a painting you're particularly proud of, your best chocolate cake recipe or a film review - nothing is too small.

Whether it's sharing your artwork, photographs and recipes or writing your very own article, sharing poetry or gardening tips, all contributions are welcome.

There's no time like the present, **so please do get in touch with Sharon.**



Sharon McCutcheon

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Sharon writes this Real News Magazine for people to read news and stories.



You can tell Sharon your story by emailing or phoning her using the details above.



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



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