



Real Life Options Group

Corporate Safeguarding,
Adult Support and Protection Group
Annual Report 2021

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

Corporate Safeguarding, Adult Support and Protection Group Annual Report

For the Period: 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021

1. Background

The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to set up a Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) in their areas. Whilst not a local authority, the Real Life Options Group does attach the utmost importance to the organisation's responsibilities for safeguarding, adult support and protection.

The Care Act 2014 gives local authorities clear safeguarding directions in law and provides details on how this should be achieved. As an integral partner in social care across the UK, the Real Life Options Group takes its responsibilities seriously and so has historically mirrored local authority safeguarding arrangements to help and protect people who are supported, and who may be at risk of abuse or neglect.

In accordance with the Care Act 2014, the Real Life Options Group:

- ✓ Established a Corporate Safeguarding Adult Support and Protection (CSASP) Group, the internal equivalent of the Safeguarding Adults Board in a local authority.
- ✓ Supports local authorities, the NHS and the police, to address local safeguarding issues.
- ✓ Works with local authorities to support shared plans for safeguarding, working with local people to decide how best to protect people in vulnerable situations.
- ✓ Publishes an annual CSASP plan and reports to the public on progress, so that different organisations can make sure they are working together in the best way.

The work of the CSASP Group is governed by the following principles:

- Empowerment – Presumption of person led decisions and informed consent.
- Prevention – It is better to take action before harm occurs.
- Proportionality – Proportionate and least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
- Protection – Support and representation for those in the greatest need.
- Accountability – Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.



The vision for the Real Life Options Group's Corporate Safeguarding, Adult Support and Protection Group is that:

"All people supported by the Real Life Options Group live a life free from abuse or neglect."

Our aim is to achieve this by working in partnership with the people we support, along with statutory and non-statutory agencies, to protect those at risk of abuse and neglect, across the organisation.

The Real Life Options Group is committed to delivering the highest standards of care and support. As a person-centred organisation it is vitally important for the Real Life Options Group to safeguard the people we support. Safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. It is fundamental to high-quality health and social care.

The CSASP Group interprets information gathered when concerns are raised about abuse, harm, or neglect to look at the risks to people who use Real Life Options Group services. The CSASP Group receives reports following internal and external inspections, which help to identify safeguarding concerns. The CSASP Group also proposes action and changes in policy to help keep people safe.

The CSASP Group ensures that the Real Life Options Group takes part in multi-agency safeguarding, working to build a picture of the experiences of people we support and how well they are being safeguarded. The CSASP works with partners such as the police, local councils, multi-disciplinary teams, integrated bodies, health agencies, other regulators and government departments.



2. The Role of the CSASP Group

- ✓ To ensure the safeguarding of people at risk across the organisation, to prevent abuse and neglect from happening.
- ✓ To receive reports on governance and audit of safeguarding practices and to promote the safeguarding interests of vulnerable people to protect their wellbeing and safety.
- ✓ To promote, inform and support the work to safeguard people across the organisation.
- ✓ To develop the organisation's strategic safeguarding policies and ensure the inclusion of these in strategy documents and plans.

3. Membership

The CSASP Group works on behalf of the Real Life Options Group, which covers Real Life Options Charity, 1st Homecare and Montana Home Care. The CSASP Group is represented by the following colleagues:

- David Sargent - Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Chair for these meetings
- Jean Trench - Managing Director, Real Life Options Charity
- Vivien Simon - Managing Director, Real Life Options Enterprise
- Rachel Matthews - Head of Talent Development and Resource Planning
- Desiree MacLennan - Head of Operations, Real Life Options Care at Home division
- Rona Maclellan - Senior Risk and Compliance Partner
- Rob Hendry - Trustee
- Jillian Hicks - Group Head of Policy and Support
- Sue Gwilt - Group Risk Officer (retired 2020)
- Rosie Coutts - 1st Homecare (resigned 2021)
- Tracy Connelly - Head of Specialist Support and Development
- Jenette Parker - minute taker for these meetings (resigned from CSASP 2021)
- Annette Hopton - PA to Board (minute taker/administrator for these meetings 2021)



4. Frequency of Meetings and Attendance

The CSASP Group held four quarterly meetings over the year from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2022. The average attendance for the year was 82%.

5. How the CSASP Group Operates

The CSASP Group informs the Real Life Options Group's strategic leadership concerning safeguarding for the people we support. The approach to safeguarding is based on promoting dignity and respect, helping all people to feel safe and making sure safeguarding is everyone's business. The CSASP Group reports to the Real Life Options Group Leadership Team and Board.

The CSASP Group's objectives are:

- ✓ To facilitate the completion of critical case reviews on relevant Safeguarding/Adult Support and Protection referrals making a formal record of learning, sharing and disseminating information across the organisation and with commissioning bodies if required to do so.
- ✓ To use the information collated to inform practice and policy development.
- ✓ To lead on the development and review of preventative strategies.

- ✔ To lead on the development of the Real Life Options Group's Annual Safeguarding/Adult Support and Protection report.
- ✔ To support functional teams in their role of informing and training Real Life Options and subsidiary company employees to carry out their responsibilities under the Real Life Options Group Safeguarding/Adult Support and Protection policy, procedures and practice guidance.
- ✔ To identify corporate priorities and areas for development for inclusion in the Real Life Options Group strategic planning and annual work programmes.

6. Whistleblowing

The Real Life Options Group has a Whistleblowing hotline available to all staff. All calls to the hotline are directed to the relevant Director in accordance with Real Life Options Group's policy. All whistleblowing notifications for the year were addressed through the Real Life Options Group Whistleblowing procedure.

The value of the whistleblowing hotline has been enhanced throughout the year with clearer communication describing how the procedures for whistleblowing, grievance and complaints all fit together.

7. England Operational Sub-Group Feedback

Over the year, the England Safeguarding sub-group has continued to meet and review safeguarding trends across services. In addition, the Operational Leadership Team have met on a weekly basis to review all safeguardings for that week and agree all appropriate investigations and actions and ensure appropriate statutory notifications. At these meetings, we have continued to assess any incidents which would be considered serious safeguardings and would warrant escalation to our Group Risk Committee for review.

As a result of the Covid19 pandemic, we established a COVID-19 Group which met weekly. Their role is to assess risk, identify issues, deploy legislative and operational guidance to our teams to manage infection control, ensure health and safety of our teams and individuals we support and ensure appropriate safeguards are in place.

Medication errors continue to be the highest number of reported safeguardings. As a result, we have adopted a root cause analysis approach within services of concern to establish better understanding and therefore solutions to reduce further medication errors, alongside reviews of policy and procedures and service protocols.

Safeguarding incidents for the reporting period were 188 across England. Medication errors made up 34% of those incidents and remains our highest area of reported safeguarding issues however this is a 2% reduction on last year's annual report.



8. Scotland Operational Sub-Group Feedback

The Scotland Operational Adult Support and Protection (ASP) Group operates in a continuous approach, meeting weekly to screen ASP reports and monthly to look at collated data and identify key trends that benefit from supportive interventions. In addition, the Director of Operations for Scotland participated in essential Group COVID-19 meetings throughout the pandemic, the Group Risk Committee, Local Authority monitoring sessions and CCPS forums.

Throughout 2020/21 we have continued to report any areas of concern with regulators and enhanced reporting ability through the continued streamlining of our internal reporting system CPOMS and the introduction of our Digital Management System (One Touch). In the early months of 2021, COVID-19 continued to dominate practice across the services; however, with robust risk mitigation in place reflecting national guidance we have ensured safe environments for our staff to work in and the people we support to live in.

At a time when health and wellbeing support is key across the country the Scotland leadership team have been key in developing a Health and Wellbeing strategy that supports our teams to be healthy at possible during this difficult period and undoubtedly ensures the continuous delivery of safe services for people we support across our communities.

9. Care at Home Services Update

1st Homecare was joined by Montana Home Care in 2020 through the acquisition of the business by the Real Life Options Group and in March 2021 Affinity Homecare was added to the Group portfolio. Although the three businesses are managed separately some systems and process have been aligned with the Real Life Options Group and these include the way in which safeguardings, accidents and incidents are recorded and reported on CPOMS.

During 2020/21 Care at Home experienced slightly higher than anticipated medication errors and missed visits, which totalled 17 medication errors and 16 missed visits across all services. Some of the reasons for this can be attributed to staff being distracted due to COVID-19, and medication classroom training having been suspended in line with government guidance.



Our safeguarding meetings continue to take place weekly as these provide learning opportunities for Service Managers through shared experiences and open discussions of individual cases. This learning is then passed down to the teams through lessons learnt scenarios and in this way we have started to reduce serious safeguarding incidents from taking place.

10. Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS)

England

For the purposes of this report, the Real Life Options Group defines DoLS in terms of applications and approvals as applied in England. Where DoLS applications were necessary, these were addressed in accordance with the Real Life Options Group policy. In the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Bill, some progress has been made to clarify deprivation of liberty definition; and to remove conflict of interest for Service Managers. However, further changes are required to protect the human rights of vulnerable people. To achieve this, it must clarify the definition of 'Deprivation of Liberty' and avoid potential conflicts of interest for Service Managers.

Rights, Risks and Limits to Freedom (Scotland)

This guidance sets the general principles that the Mental Welfare Commission believes apply to the use of restraint in any setting. The guidance aims to help guide thinking on the use of restraint and encourage all care staff to consider their actions and the impact that those actions may have on the people they support. As a result The Real Life Options Group adheres to this guidance and carefully considers these principles in partnership with the supported person and relevant stakeholders when any form of restraint is being considered. The main principles include:

- Full consideration as to why possible restraint may be of benefit to the individual.
- Initial assessment: Including strategies to manage current and future risk.
- Identify and agree what is acceptable risk.
- Consider any alternatives to deal with the agreed risk, and applied for the minimum possible time).
- Applying the restraint: (If restraint is considered necessary it should be the minimum required to deal with the agreed risk, and applied for the minimum possible time).
- Continuous reassessment.
- Plan for the unexpected.



11. Safeguarding, Adult Support and Protection Incidents

The organisation was compliant through the year with the Real Life Options Group policy and with local authority requirements for the reporting of Safeguarding, Adult Support and Protection incidents. The Real Life Options Group developed a dynamic and 'whole organisation' risk programme which includes clear reporting lines and criteria to trigger reports to the Charity Commission and OSCR.

12. Participation in Serious Case Reviews (England) and Cause for Concern Reviews (Scotland)

The focus on serious case reviews, in line with both multi-agency policy and national guidance, is to learn from past experience and the specific event examined; improve future practice and outcomes by acting on learning identified by the review; improve multi-agency working and compliance with any other multi-agency or single agency procedures; including, regulated care services. For the Real Life Options Group, a Serious Case Review is defined as follows:

There is a clear process for commissioning and carrying out of a serious case review through partnership and usually led by a Local Authority and/or Commissioners.

A Serious Care Review is commissioned when an adult experiencing abuse or neglect dies, or when there has been a serious incident, or in circumstances involving the abuse or neglect of one or more adults. This means that:

- Abuse or neglect is known, or suspected, to have been involved.
- The death is by suicide or accidental death or by alleged murder, culpable homicide, reckless conduct, or act of violence.
- The purpose of having a case review is not to reinvestigate nor to apportion blame.

Process:

- i. To establish whether there are lessons to be learnt from the circumstances of the case about the way in which local professionals and agencies work together to safeguard vulnerable adults.
- ii. To review the effectiveness of procedures (Both multi-agency and those of individual organisations).
- iii. To inform and improve local inter-agency practice.
- iv. To improve practice by acting on learning (developing best practice).
- v. To prepare or commission an overview report which brings together and analyses the findings of the various reports from agencies in order to make recommendations for future action.



13. Charity Regulators

In line with our Charity status, we are regulated by the Charity Commission (England & Wales) and the Scottish Charity Register (OSCR). As an organisation we have a responsibility to appropriately report any serious incident/notifiable event to our regulators, and our Group Risk Committee and Significant Incident Panel Meetings ensure this process is robustly followed and completed in a timely manner.

In 2020/2021 we submitted 4 serious incident reports (2 in England and 2 in Scotland) to our regulators and details of these are as follows:

- Nov 2020 England: Abuse/Neglect. This was reported to the Charity Commission.
- Nov 2020 Scotland: Abuse/Neglect. This was reported to the Charity Commission and OSCR.
- Dec 2020 England: Abuse. This was reported to the Charity Commission.
- Mar 2021 Scotland: Neglect by a third party (out with the RLO Group) This was reported to the Charity Commission and OSCR.

As an organisation we are focused on ensuring the people we support, our staff and stakeholders are kept safe and free from harm and therefore a major element within our regulatory reporting process focuses on proactively ensuring any lessons learnt from reportable events are evaluated and widely disseminated across the organisation.

14. Learning and Development

In the period ending 31st March 2021, 92.93% of Real Life Options staff completed either Safeguarding, Adult Support and Protection or Adult Support and Protection 2021 & Safeguarding 2021 learning.

In 1st Homecare employees, 97.61% of staff have completed Adult Support and Protection learning.

More than

95%



of staff have completed safeguarding or adult support and protection learning.

15. Policies

The Safeguarding/Adult Support and Protection and Child Protection policies were reviewed and amended in September 2019 in response to a recommendation from a Care Inspectorate inspection.

In March 2020, a further policy review was undertaken in response to the Jonty Bravery incident and existing instructions strengthened to clarify the process staff must follow if a person we support discloses an intention to harm.

16. Progress Report on 2020-21 Priorities

The CSASP Group's priorities for 2020 to 2021 were focussed on Empowerment, Prevention, Proportionality, Protection, Partnership and Accountability.

How Did We Do?

- i. **Empowerment:** *"I am asked what I want as outcomes from the safeguarding process and these directly inform what happens."*

This is being achieved through digital platforms that enable people we support and staff to speak about their experiences and to know that they are influencing the Real Life Options Group's direction. The Real Life Options digital platform is underway in exemplar services.

The Real Life Options Group applied to the Digital Lifeline project and are awaiting results. In individual services, the support plans and local programmes facilitate local voice, but much more work is needed to facilitate national voice and influence for people supported by the Real Life Options Group.



- ii. **Prevention:** *"I receive clear and simple information about what abuse is, how to recognise the signs and what I can do to seek help."*

This is being achieved through effective, clear communication and training where briefings are easy to access and read. The Skills Academy has delivered highly effective training across a range of subjects including safeguarding. Staff have been empowered through the programme to become better at identifying the signs of actual and potential abuse.

- iii. **Proportionality:** *"I am sure that the staff will work for my best interests and they will get involved as much as is needed."*

This is being achieved through responsive digital support planning. The Real Life Options digital platform is underway in exemplar services.

- iv. **Protection:** *“I get help and support to report abuse. I get help to take part in the safeguarding process to the extent to which I want and to which I am able.”*

This is being achieved through effective communication channels that enable people we support and staff to speak out openly and clearly without fear. The Skills Academy has delivered highly effective training across a range of subjects including safeguarding. The Serious Incident Panel process is focussed on prevention and learning to enhance the organisation’s ability to protect vulnerable people.

- v. **Partnerships:** *“I know that staff treat any personal and sensitive information in confidence, only sharing what is helpful and necessary. I am confident that staff will work together to get the best results for me.”*

This is being achieved through risk management and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) processes.

- vi. **Accountability:** *“I understand the role of everyone in my life.”*

This is being achieved through effective support planning and communication. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of creating mechanisms that assure services and promote accountability when staff are unable to assess services in person due to unprecedented circumstances. Such assurance will be achievable through the systems and processes that have; and are being designed in response to the pandemic.

17. The CSASP Group Priorities 2021-22

The CSASP Group’s priorities for next year are:

Prevention

- ✓ Provide accessible information and strengthen communication.
- ✓ Raise awareness and build confidence with staff and volunteers through training and development.
- ✓ Improve local engagement.



Protection

- ✓ Provide effective, professional, ethical and timely responses to reports and concerns.
- ✓ focus on specific areas to improve policy and procedure.
- ✓ Adopt a proportionate and professional approach to Safeguarding, Adult Support and Protection in the Real Life Options Group.



Partnership

- ✓ Make contact with safeguarding Boards to share our annual report and offer opportunities for conversation.
- ✓ Contribute regionally and nationally to help to further develop the national CSASP agenda.
- ✓ Work with the Real Life Options Groups' strategic partners to ensure joined up approaches.





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Montana Home Care

