



# Real Life Options Group

Corporate Safeguarding,  
Adult Support and Protection Group  
Annual Report 2022

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

# Corporate Safeguarding, Adult Support and Protection Group Annual Report

For the Period: 31st March 2020 to 1st April 2022

## 1. Background

The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to set up a Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) in their areas. Real Life Options Group is committed to satisfying its responsibilities for safeguarding, adult support, and protection in accordance with the requirements of the Act which gives local authorities clear safeguarding directions in law and provides detail on how this should be achieved. As an integral partner in social care across the UK 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 Act 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 who 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 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.

CSASP 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. CSASP receives reports following internal and external inspections, which help to identify safeguarding concerns. The CSASP also proposes action and changes in policy to help keep people safe.



CSASP ensures that Real Life Options Group takes part in multi-agency safeguarding, working to build an understanding 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 - Group Head of HR
- 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 Business Management
- Tracy Connelly - Head of Specialist Support and Development
- Annette Hopton - PA to Board



### 4. Frequency of Meetings and Attendance

The CSASP Group held four quarterly meetings over the year from 1st April 2021 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 instruct the facilitation 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 external partners, such as 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 Managing Directors/Directors and Department Leads 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 and lessons learnt were distributed as required.

As an organisation we continue to further develop our whistleblowing process and by the Autumn of 2022 we expect to use our CPOMS system to digitally capture this information going forward. This will enable more robust processes for analysing whistleblowing trends across the group in the future.

## 7. Enterprise Operational Sub-Group Feedback

Over the year, the Enterprise 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.

We have continued to 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, as we transition to a position of living with and managing COVID-19.

Medication errors continue to be the highest number of reported safeguardings; often as a result of human error and not always following medication policies and protocols. Causes of concern have also been prominent in reporting and these two areas have accounted for 64% of our safeguardings over the year.

Safeguarding incidents for the reporting period were 121 across Enterprise (LD), a 7% decrease from last year. Medication errors totalled 39, again this represents a 28% decrease on last year's figures, demonstrating the significant work which has been undertaken to understand safeguardings across our services and to implement the appropriate interventions and strategies to improve our services for the people we support.



## 8. Enterprise Care at Home Operational Feedback

1st Homecare, Montana Home Care and Affinity Homecare are separate subsidiaries within the Real Life Options Group. The three businesses are managed separately, however 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.

All subsidiary safeguarding meetings continue to take place on a weekly basis, with the Risk and Compliance Team, to ensure that all safeguardings are accurately logged, and reported and to ensure appropriate actions are taken to safeguard the individuals we support. This also provides an opportunity to share best practice and learning at a senior level with colleagues across the Real Life Options Group.

Branch 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.

Causes for concern, remains the highest reporting category; this is likely to be as a result of the nature of service delivery, in that whilst visiting homes carers are more likely to be aware and report other factors effecting an individual's support such as home environment, family conflict and health and wellbeing.

## 9. Charity Operational Sub-Group Feedback

The Charity Operational Adult Support and Protection (ASP) Group was created under the new Charity Division established in April 2021. The group meets weekly to not only screen ASP reports but to consider trends identified through collated data and make key decisions to introduce and embed supportive interventions. The Managing Director of Charity and members of the Head of Operations team participated in essential ongoing COVID-19 meetings in 2021/22 and the dissemination of key pandemic guidance and feedback across Scotland and England, the Group Risk Committee, Local Authority monitoring sessions and CCPS forums.

Throughout 2021/22 we have continued to report all areas of concern with regulators and have further enhanced our reporting ability through our internal reporting system CPOMS and the continuing roll out of our Digital Management System (One Touch). We work diligently with the Risk and Compliance Team to ensure that as we move further out of the pandemic our practice across services remains robust and reflective of both Governments' guidance and legislation. This reduces risks for the people we support and staff as well as offering a safe environment to both live and work in.

Medication errors remain the safeguarding area of concern across both Charity and the organisation. There has been an overall increase of safeguarding events in the year however this could have been predicted given the structural changes and therefore a large increase of services, delivery hours and the number of people Charity now supports. The process outlined above of reporting and risk mitigation ensures that the Charity team are protecting the people we support and the staff group in all circumstances.

More than ever before the health and wellbeing guidance that we can offer to people we support, staff and their families is critical. In Charity we have continued to lead and drive the Group Health & Wellbeing strategy to provide not only counselling and toolkits but also the opportunity to reflect sensitively on the difficult time we have experienced. Keeping staff and those we support involved and informed has created the platform for continuous delivery of safe services across our communities.

## 10. Restrictive Practice

### England

As the Liberty Protection Safeguard regulation will soon replace DOLS, the Real Life Options Group is currently focused on:



- Ensuring internal mental capacity assessments and best interest decision making documents are legally robust
- Providing a programme of bespoke Mental Capacity Assessment training for staff, with a clear focus on restrictions and restraint reduction.

Once the draft regulations are published later this year we will work in partnership with Regulatory Bodies to meet legislative requirements and promote best practice and future outcomes.

### Scotland

Rights, Risks and Limits to Freedom Legislation in conjunction with Restraints Reduction Scotland aim to eliminate the misuse of restrictive practices in Scotland, ensuring that where these practices are used, they are done safely, with respect for people's human rights, and in a culture of openness and transparency.

## 11. Organisational Restraint Reduction Strategy

In line with the Restraint Reduction Network UK Real Life Options Group are focused on and committed to embedding a programme of restraint reduction across all areas of service delivery.

Work has already started with implementation of our Person Centred Support and Enablement (PCSE) programme which raises awareness of restrictive practices and focuses on culture change in terms of doing with people rather than for people, concentrating on skills development and further opportunities for engagement to improve the quality of life of people we support.

Over the next 12 months it is expected that the people we support, who currently live with restriction in their lives, will be supported to develop robust restraint reduction plans, which will concentrate on safely minimising the use of restrictive practice where at all possible.

## 12. Safeguarding, Adult Support and Protection Incidents

The organisation was compliant through the year with both 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 implement a dynamic and 'whole organisation' risk programme which includes clear reporting and escalation criteria to trigger reports to the Charity Commission and OSCR.

## 13. Serious Case Reviews (England) and Cause for Concern Reviews (Scotland)

The purpose of a serious case review is not to reinvestigate nor to apportion blame. Its remit is to learn from past experience and improve on:

- Future practice
- Multi and individual agency working
- And compliance with other multi and single agency procedures.

## 14. 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.

## 15. Charity Commission and OSCR Reporting

Between 1st April 2021 and 31st March 2022 as a Group, Real Life Options completed one new submission report to our regulators and details of this are as follows:

- November 2021 Scotland
- Safeguarding/Adult Support and Protection (ASP) areas highlighted were Abuse/Neglect
- 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.

## 16. Learning and Development

The Real Life Options Group are passionate about ensuring all our employees have a robust understanding in relation to their Safeguarding/Adult Support and Protection roles and responsibilities. As a collective group we work extremely hard to ensure adequate training for our staff is in place and that this resource is kept current up to date at all times.



Although there were periods during the height of the pandemic where we struggled to meet the high standards we had set ourselves, we are pleased to say that our current Safeguarding/Adult Support and Protection training statistics are as follows:

90.99% of Real Life Options staff have completed either Safeguarding 2022 or Adult Support and Protection 2022 learning.

93.59% of 1st Homecare employees have completed Adult Support and Protection 2022 learning.

More than

**90%**

of Real Life Options staff and

**94%**

of 1st Homecare staff have completed safeguarding or adult support and protection learning.



## 17. Policies

A Safeguarding and Adult Support and Protection Review was completed in May 2022 as part of the annual review process. Changes that were made were formatting and creating the Procedure flow chart.

## 18. Progress Report on 2020-21 Priorities

The Priorities for 2021 to 2022 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 continues to be achieved through application of the Person Centred Model of Support and the One Touch digital platform which enable people we support and staff to speak about their experiences and to know that they are influencing Real Life Option Group’s direction. The third My Voice survey for 2021/22, which was created for the people we support was published in July. The first survey for 2022/23 went live in August. In individual services the support plans and local programmes facilitate local voice.



- 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.”*

The Skills Academy has delivered highly effective learning opportunities 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. Further development of internal awareness raising programmes is needed.

- 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. A new Communications Strategy is now in place. 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 effective risk management and GDPR processes.

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

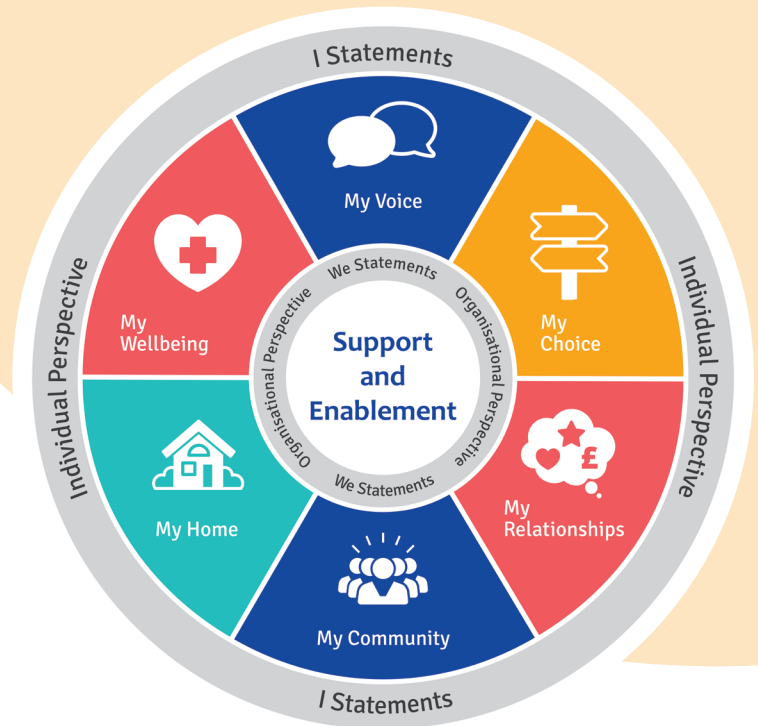
This is being achieved through effective support planning and communication.

## 19. The CSASP Group Priorities 2022-23

The CSASP Group’s priorities for next year are:

- i. Improving our initial response to safeguarding concerns – making strategy discussions more effective.
- ii. Preventing abuse – developing an improved approach to define and guide our work.
- iii. Sharing robust information – building on and strengthening existing systems.
- iv. Developing how the organisation engages, listens, and responds to the views of people we support and their families.

# Model of Support



Every person is unique and communicates in a way that is meaningful to them. The people we support and their advocates must be heard. Their voices should guide their support, inspire and influence the wider organisation and their communities.



People should feel empowered to have choice and control in their lives. We spend time getting to know every person to understand what is important to them. Support is uniquely tailored to each individual to live the life they choose. Putting their choices first, we focus on a person's strengths and capabilities, working with them to achieve their real potential.



It is important that people feel happy and loved and enjoy positive friendships and relationships. We support and encourage active participation from their circle of support to enable individuals to have a sense of belonging and to feel valued.



Everyone should feel valued and have a sense that they belong within their community. Individuals are supported to explore opportunities to integrate with others who have shared interests. People are encouraged to contribute to their communities, learn new skills and try new experiences that enables greater independence.



Home is where the heart is, a place where we belong. It is our safe space where we can express our personality. We enable people to live as independently as possible in their own homes, supporting their everyday choices about their home environment and the way they live their lives.



Good health and wellbeing is fundamental to getting the most out of life. As people transition through life we support them as their circumstances, needs and aspirations change. We encourage individuals to maintain a healthy lifestyle and make choices that positively contribute toward their general wellbeing.



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