

Real News

Issue 107

How Does Your Garden Grow?

Celebrating a summer of resilience, partnering and real achievements

Flying high
to stay
connected

Hello to our new
Support and
Enablement Partners

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

Hope House Community Garden Project

An exciting new initiative to support local projects for local people



"I am thrilled to see how the people we support and our staff team have really got behind this project. It has been such an empowering experience for everyone involved. I would like to thank our staff and our community neighbours for their support and look forward to seeing the garden project develop and grow."

Vivien Simon, Director of Operations England.

Friends and neighbours in Oxford are incredibly proud of their community garden project which has seen hard work and dedication result in healthy and bountiful fresh produce. At a residents' forum earlier this year, the group decided to make the most of the beautiful summer weather and use part of their large garden to grow fruit and vegetables, with the intention that any surplus is donated to local homeless charities and foodbanks.

A £600 grant from the Real Life Options Community Connections Fund enabled the friends with their staff team's support to purchase raised garden beds, compost, tools and seeds. Further support came from local action group

Harvest@Home, in the form of subsidised plants and machinery.

Everyone who lives at Hope House has been fully involved throughout the garden project from planting seedlings to watering and harvesting the produce. The friends also learnt how to create sustainable compost from food and garden waste. They are keen to see the project continue to flourish and look forward to the support of two volunteers who will join them in the next few weeks.



Some friends in Oxford have been working hard on a community garden project.



They have been planting, growing, watering and harvesting seeds and plants.



They received 600 pounds from the Community Connections Fund to buy things for the garden project.



They have picked some of the vegetables and enjoyed eating them with their meals.

Hello To Our Support And Enablement Partners

Embedding our new approach to person-centred support

As we continue to make real progress towards embedding our model of support organisation-wide, we are delighted to announce the appointment of Support and Enablement Partners Lisa Livingstone (England) and Susan Griffiths (Scotland). Lisa and Susan have a wealth of experience as registered Service Managers and are passionate about enabling individuals to have greater control over their lives and developing teams to provide truly person-centred support.

A bespoke Support and Enablement Toolkit has been developed in conjunction with the people we support, partnering organisations and subject matter experts which will be used by our staff teams to embed best practice, monitor progress and capture measurable outcomes. Tailored Support and Enablement modules are being added to our organisation's learning portal, The Skills Academy, with staff learning and development due to begin shortly.

Lisa and Susan will work closely with service teams to widen the programme roll out, educate staff teams and coach Support and Enablement Practice Leads across our services.



"When we announced our ambition at last year's conference, our managers were fully supportive of refining our approach to person-centred support. We are already seeing strong engagement from our staff teams and positive outcomes for the people supported by our organisation. Lisa and Susan are very welcome additions to a highly dedicated and focused Support and Enablement Management Team."
David Sargent, Chief Executive.



Staff at Real Life Options are learning about a new way of supporting people. We call it support and enablement.



We think support and enablement is good because it is about supporting people in the way they want.



Lisa and Susan have a new job. Their job is to help staff become very good at support and enablement.



Staff will learn about support and enablement from people who do it really well and from internet courses.

Shining A Light On Dementia

Glow memory walkers raising money to support people affected by dementia



"I liked everything about the walk. I enjoyed being with my friends and when people clapped and shouted 'well done' and 'not long now'." Sheila.

Earlier in the year, a group of friends raised almost **£1,000** by getting involved in a fundraising activity in support of the Alzheimer's Society. Sheila, Paul and Anjum from Newcastle together with support staff took part in a five kilometre Glow Memory Walk along Newcastle Quayside by the banks of the river Tyne. Another friend, Maureen, was unable to join them and so instead contributed by raising funds and making a donation.

"I really enjoyed walking along the Quayside and really want to do it again." Anjum.

Sheila, Paul and Anjum were keen to play a part in raising awareness and funds for the Society as they have a friend affected by dementia. Service Manager Katie Murphy is

full of admiration for the walkers who raised a whopping £988 in total. With a family member affected by the disease, it is a subject close to her heart too.

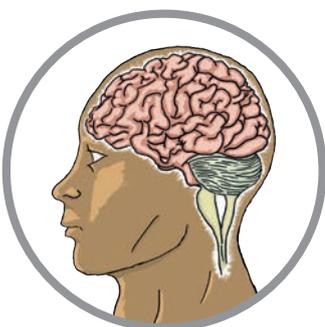
The trio and their support team Carly, Helen, Helen, Hilary, Michelle and Jim thoroughly enjoyed the atmosphere and encouragement from the crowds, particularly on such a cold night.



Sheila, Paul and Anjum live in Newcastle. They raised almost one thousand pounds for charity.



They walked five kilometres with lots of other people to raise money for the Alzheimer's Society.



The Alzheimer's Society help people with Dementia. Dementia is a disease of the brain.



Sheila, Paul and Anjum enjoyed the charity walk. They liked it when people cheered and clapped.

Helpful Tools For Browsing Our Website

Improving the website visitor experience for a wider audience

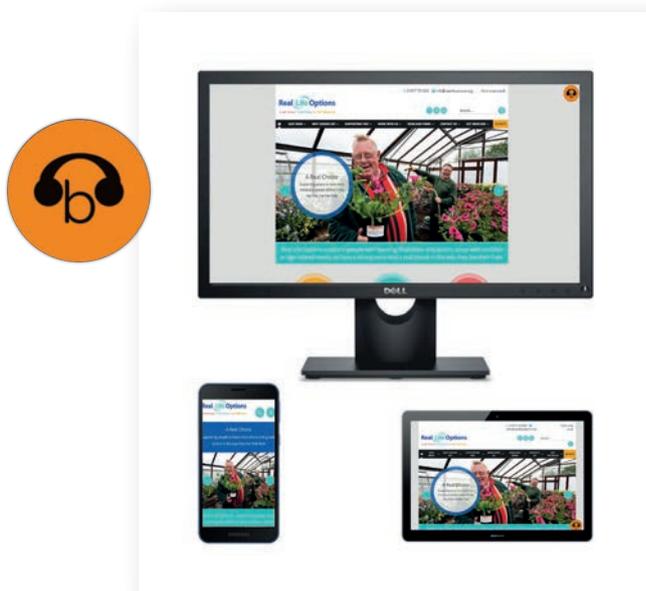
We regularly review our website to see how we can make it as easy as possible for visitors to find what they are looking for in addition to including tools that open up the website experience to a wider audience. We've provided a brief summary of some of the features that you might not be familiar with.

Browsealoud (the little orange button at the top of each page) is a piece of software embedded within the website that opens up the webpage experience to a wider audience. A Browsealoud Quick Reference Card explains how Browsealoud works and the various features it provides.

Our services are inspected and rated by the Care Quality Commission in England and the Care Inspectorate in Scotland. So that people have easy access to the latest reports for our registered services, we provide quick links to these on our website. These can be found by visiting the **Why Choose Us / Our Impact / What the Regulators Say** page on our website at www.reallifeoptions.org.

Finally, the **search tool** at the top of each page is great for finding information quickly. Simply type in a word or phrase, click on the spyglass icon and the website will list wherever that term is used across the website.

To find out more, visit our website: www.reallifeoptions.org and click on 'Accessibility Statement' in the footer of the website page.



We want lots of people to enjoy visiting our website and to learn about the work we do.



We have provided some tools to make it easier for people to use our website.



Browsealoud is a tool that people can use to listen to words being spoken out loud or in a different language.



You can find out how we have made our website easier to use at www.reallifeoptions.org.

Swapping Football Boots For Gardening Tools

David has found a new hobby and a taste for strawberries



David from Oxford loves being outdoors and when he is not playing football with the Oxford Casuals, he enjoys train spotting, particularly steam locomotives. Like many people across the UK, David's favourite sport and hobbies were severely restricted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following government guidelines to stay at home, David decided to swap football boots for gardening tools and embarked on a garden makeover. Before work began, a plan was formulated with assistance from his Support

Worker Julius which included what compost to use, which plants to buy and where to position them within the garden.

Despite not being a lover of strawberries, David was keen to grow strawberry plants and tried the fruit once the berries had ripened. He likes strawberries so much now that he asked staff to support him to grow more plants. David enjoys seeing the garden flowers bloom and remembers to water them regularly to keep them at their best.

*"I love my new look garden."
David from Oxford.*

David now has a badminton net in his garden which helps him keep fit in addition to an outdoor darts board and enjoys playing against members of his support staff. David is delighted with what he has achieved with the support of his team and says, "I love my new look garden."



David from Oxford loves playing football. Because of COVID-19 he could not play with his team.



David decided that he wanted to make his garden look nice with different plants.



David wanted to grow strawberry plants. He liked the taste so decided to grow some more.



David has a darts board in his garden. He enjoys playing darts with his support staff.

Calling for nominations from across the UK to recognise our real heroes

The Annual Real Heroes Awards recognise and reward outstanding individuals across the organisation – both staff and the people we support. There are prize vouchers up for grabs too - £50 for individual winners and £100 for teams plus lots of other goodies.

If you would like to nominate a staff member, staff team or a person we support, please email Sam Goodwin (samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org) the details of who you would like to nominate. The categories are:

STAFF

- ☞ Support Worker of the Year
- ☞ Team Coordinator of the Year
- ☞ Service Manager of the Year
- ☞ Team of the Year
- ☞ Business Support Hero of the Year
- ☞ Living the Values Hero of the Year

PEOPLE WE SUPPORT

- ☞ Special Achievement Hero of the Year
- ☞ My Voice Hero of the Year
- ☞ My Choice Hero of the Year
- ☞ My Community Hero of the Year
- ☞ My Wellbeing Hero of the Year



The closing date for nominations is the 30th September 2020.



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 the details.

Volunteering Matters At Real Life Options

Volunteering can make a real difference in our local communities

People that work in the support and care sector come from all walks of life. Some choose it as a career option when leaving school whilst others opt to become a Support Worker later in life. For the thousands working at Real Life Options, it is a highly rewarding role that offers a great working environment with a fantastic team of people.

For those who are unsure if it is for them, volunteering is a great way to find out what is like to work in the social support sector. Marie, a student from Falkirk was keen to gain experience and spent four months as a Real Life Volunteer.

"Before I started my placement, I was very nervous about walking into an unfamiliar environment. Staff helped me feel at ease and were all so friendly. My experience has definitely been a positive one and has really boosted my confidence. It showed me that there are good carers out there that can deliver good practice. I can't wait to return soon to volunteer." Marie from Falkirk.



Working alongside support staff in a care home setting, Marie enjoyed getting to know the people who live there; helping with some of the daily tasks and getting involved in one to one activities.

If you would like to find out more about volunteering roles at Real Life Options, visit our website at www.reallifeoptions.org or email:

SCOTLAND - Nick McLaughlin

nick.mclaughlin@reallifeoptions.org

ENGLAND - Andrew Walker

andrew.walker@reallifeoptions.org



Some people want to donate their time to help others. They are called volunteers.



Marie from Falkirk is a student. She worked as a volunteer for four months.



Marie enjoyed being a volunteer. She said that it helped build her confidence.



People that want to volunteer for Real Life Options can email Nick or Andrew for more information.

Flying High To Stay Connected

Peter had an amazing holiday with fantastic support from Heather

Positive relationships are so important for our mental health and wellbeing and when Peter from West Lothian was invited to visit his friend Steven in Australia, he jumped at the chance. Steven, a former Support Worker at Real Life Options, emigrated to Australia several years ago but always made time to visit Peter during his return trips to Scotland.

Peter and Steven had formed a close bond over the years and so when Steven and his wife invited Peter to join them in Australia for a holiday of a lifetime, he was absolutely thrilled. With plenty of planning and preparation throughout the previous year and with the fantastic support of staff team member Heather Paterson, Peter's trip finally went ahead in early 2020.

During his holiday, Peter had an amazing time, visiting a number of Perth's many attractions including the City Zoo and Pinaroo Park to see the kangaroos. The friends enjoyed barbeques, went on boat trips, visited a chocolate factory and even managed to fit in a weekend vacation at beautiful Dunsborough Beach. Service Manager Fay Rodger is full



*"It was good to see Steven and I really enjoyed my holiday."
Peter from West Lothian.*

of praise for Heather who did a brilliant job of supporting Peter to plan his visit, enjoy his time in Australia and to stay safe during his travels and return journey to Scotland.

Peter, who is sure to remember his antipodean adventure for many years to come says: "It was good to see Steven and I really enjoyed my holiday."



Peter and Steven became friends when Steven lived in Scotland. Steven now lives in Australia.



Steven invited Peter to visit him for a holiday. Australia is a long way away.



Heather helped Peter plan for his trip. She went with Peter to support him on his holiday.



Peter enjoyed his holiday. He went to the zoo, saw kangeroos and went to the beach.

Don't Miss Our Annual Review 2019-20

Making real progress together against our roadmap for success

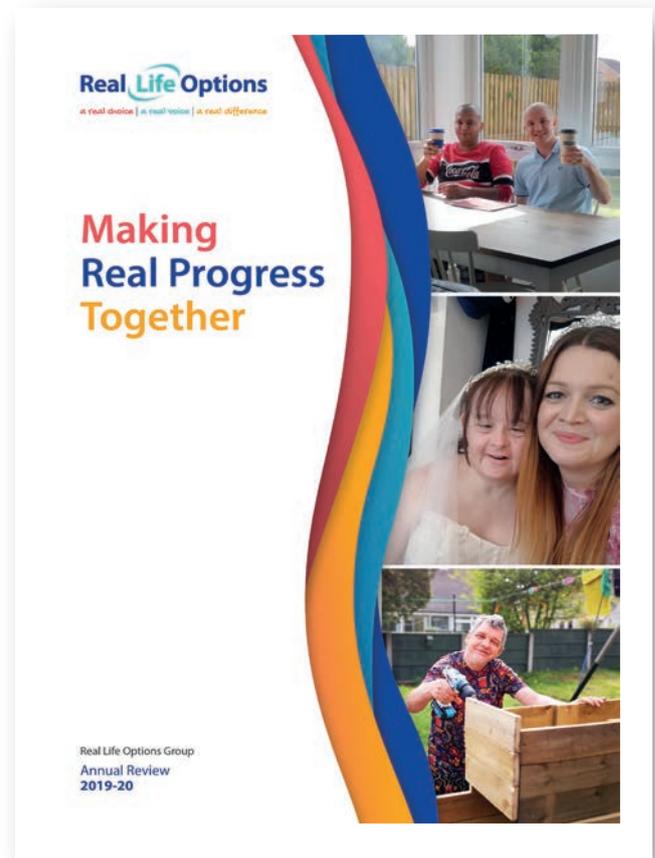
We are delighted to share our latest Annual Review entitled 'Making Real Progress Together' which provides a summary of inspirational achievements and news stories about the people we support in addition to a review of our organisational and financial performance for 2019-20.

You can read how at our annual conference in October 2019, plans for realising operational excellence were reviewed against the organisation's roadmap for success with attendees hearing from their peers about the emerging benefits of our new model of support.

In this year's Annual Review, you can discover how plans to improve links within our local communities through a dedicated fund are well underway as is the volunteering strategy aimed at enhancing opportunities for the people we support.

"We cannot thank our staff enough for their commitment and unwavering dedication during these challenging times." David Wilkin, Chair.

To view a copy of the Annual Review, please visit our website at: <https://reallifeoptions.org/annual-review-2019-20-now-available/>



The Annual Review is about things that happened at Real Life Options in the last business year.



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



The Annual Review says how we have supported people and how we have managed the charity.



You can read a copy of the Annual Review on our website or you can download a copy to your computer.

Swapping Singing For Secateurs

Busker Steven has been transforming his mum's garden during lockdown

Steven from Leeds enjoys nothing more than socialising with people. An enthusiastic rugby player and keen musician, Steven could often be found busking and entertaining passers-by with his singing and guitar playing in the city centre prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Earlier in the year, due to underlying health conditions, Steven followed government guidelines to shield at home.

Not one to be dispirited by the lockdown, Steven kept himself busy transforming his mum's garden with the aid of Real Life Options' Support Worker April. Their efforts have converted an unused overgrown space into an area where Steven and his family can relax and enjoy being outdoors.

Delighted with the results, the hard working team celebrated the garden makeover with a socially distanced barbeque.



*"Steven is a very sociable young man. We are so proud of how he has handled being at home and what he has achieved over the lockdown period."
Joanne Stringer, Service Manager.*



Stephen is from Leeds. He enjoys playing his guitar and entertaining people.



During lockdown, Stephen missed going out. He decided to help transform his mum's garden.



Stephen and his support worker April worked very hard to make the garden look nice.



They celebrated the garden makeover with a socially distanced barbeque.

Annual CSASP Report 2019-20 Available

A summary of our approach to safeguarding, adult support and protection

We recently announced that our Corporate Safeguarding, Adult Support and Protection (CSASP) Group Annual Report for 2019-2020 is now available to read.

The document provides an overview of the Real Life Options Group's safeguarding governance during the last twelve months and the CSASP Group's role in reviewing, monitoring and developing preventative strategies to ensure that individuals supported by our organisation live a life free from abuse or neglect.

"We have worked hard to improve our systems and procedures during the last twelve months but we know there is always more that can be done and to this end will continue to invest in training and technology. We remain fully committed to driving excellence across our operations to safeguard and protect the people we support."
David Sargent, Chief Executive.

To view a copy of the report, please visit our website at: <https://reallifeoptions.org/csasp-group-annual-report-2020/>



Real Life Options Group

Corporate Safeguarding,
Adult Support and Protection Group
Annual Report 2020

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



We have special meetings to make sure that we are doing the very best for the people we support.



At the meetings we talk about what we are doing to protect people and help them stay safe.



Every year we create a report so that people can read what we have done throughout the year.



You can read a copy of the report on our website or you can download it to your computer.

Garden Makeover A Huge Success

Fundraising and community partnering to create a fabulous forum venue

Friends in Fraserburgh are delighted that an idea arising from their Loons and Quines (a local term for boys and girls) Forum two years ago is now a reality. The neighbours, who live in their own homes, lacked a suitable space for their meetings and whilst there was a shared garden, the area wasn't easily accessible for people with mobility challenges. The forum members, with the assistance of their support staff, decided to raise funds to turn their garden into a welcoming space where they could spend time with friends and hold their meetings.

After a flurry of fundraising activities involving sponsored walks, bric-a-brac, crafts and bake sales, a dance and a family day event, the friends and their support team raised almost £6,000. With support from the Community Payback Scheme, a volunteer crew was organised to prepare the site and start the garden project.

The friends are over the moon with the results. The garden is now a colourful and tranquil environment, with seating areas, bird boxes, trees and planters providing an amazing community space that can be enjoyed by the neighbours and visitors alike.

"The garden project has been a great experience for everyone involved as each person has had a say and played their own part in creating an inviting and much loved space. A big thank you to our staff and our community neighbours and volunteers for their support too."

Debbie O'Neill, Service Manager.



Friends in Fraserburgh have regular Loons and Quines Forum meetings.



At one meeting, they decided to turn their garden into a beautiful and accessible space.



They raised lots of money and with support from their community, finished the garden project.



The friends and their support staff are pleased with the results. The garden is colourful and relaxing.

Introducing Our Digital Recruitment Panel

Being creative when it comes to involving the people we support

We have a long history of involving the people we support in the recruitment of our staff however, with the current COVID-19 restrictions on travel and meeting in groups, we have had to become creative in how we do this. A new style Digital Recruitment Panel has proved to be a resounding success when recently used to interview five candidates who had applied to join the Real Life Options Group as Trustees (Non-Executive Directors) for our Board.

The Digital Recruitment Panel consisted of two groups of four people accompanied by their Support Workers or a Service Manager, in addition to a facilitator. Using Microsoft Teams, the panel interviewed the candidates by asking conversation-style questions to help put them at ease followed by a One Page Profile exercise. Each candidate was assessed and scored based on their ability to engage, their participation in the activities and how effectively they explained things in an interesting, clear and easy to understand way.

The Digital Recruitment Panel fed back their valuable insights to the Formal Interview Panel, which consisted of our Chief Executive David

Sargent, our Chair David Wilkin and two Board Members; Hannah Mounsey and Rob Hendry.

A big thank you to Anjum, Angela, Gordon and Alistair (Group 1) and Hannah, John, Jack and Stephen (Group 2) for their input and advice.

"It was a very good experience. I enjoyed it and would definitely do it again." Stephen from Fraserburgh.



We involve the people we support when we interview for new staff and Board members.



We have created a new safe way that people can take part. It is called the Digital Recruitment Panel.



People supported by a staff member use a video link to talk and ask questions.



Everyone who took part in a recent Digital Recruitment Panel enjoyed the experience.

We Would Love To Hear Your News!

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

Real News is a quarterly compilation of all the latest news stories brought together as an Easy Read digital magazine for you to share with your friends, family or colleagues.

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.**



Whether it's sharing your artwork, photographs and recipes or celebrating an event, an achievement or a milestone, all contributions are very welcome.

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.**

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

Sharon McCutcheon
Group BD and Marketing Manager

 sharon.mccutcheon@reallifeoptions.org

 01977 781800

 www.reallifeoptions.org



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.