

Real News

Issue 108



Celebrating Real Heroes

Awards, Achievements
Volunteering & Competitions

Real Heroes
Annual Awards
& Conference

Putting
Volunteering
Into the Spotlight

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

Annual Real Heroes Awards 2020

Huge congratulations to all the winners, shortlistees and nominees in our Annual Real Heroes Awards 2020.

This year we decided to embrace the current COVID-19 travel restrictions as an opportunity to involve more people from across the Group in ways that previously would not have been possible. Therefore, a huge number of people we support joined us as presenters for the internal Real Heroes Awards virtual ceremony which was broadcast live on Thursday 10th December to all employees and services.

The Annual Real Heroes Awards recognise and reward outstanding individuals across the organisation – both staff and the people we support. This annual event differs from the standard Real Heroes Awards in that there are specific categories of excellence for both staff and the people we support, which is a special opportunity to reward people's achievements and contributions.

We have been flooded with positive feedback from people we support who were winners or presenters in the event, with reports that being involved gave them "a great confidence boost," they were "thrilled and very excited" to be a part of the ceremony and that staff were "incredibly proud" of their achievements.

Ruth from Leeds said she "felt like she was on the Hollywood red carpet receiving an award," with her Support Worker, Helen Swift, adding, "It felt like that to us as well when we were filming. She really did look lovely and so happy."



"We know every single one of us has gone above and beyond in 2020. But the Real Heroes Awards recognise those people who have been truly outstanding. Those amongst us who have achieved something exceptional and really embraced our values – both staff and the people we support."

David Sargent, CEO



We had a special online ceremony to celebrate the people we support and our staff.



The ceremony was called the Real Heroes Awards.



Some of the awards were presented by people we support.



Lots of people received a trophy for all the good things they do.

Putting Volunteering Into the Spotlight

In recent months, people living in and around the Newcastle area have been thoroughly entertained with songs and guitar playing from local volunteer group 'Into the Spotlight'. The six friends and Real Life Volunteers – Ian, Michael, Bruce, Arthur, Elaine and Daniel – have been performing popular songs from across the decades in the grounds of care homes to entertain and lift people's spirits during the pandemic.

Support Worker Ian Curry applied for a grant from the Real Life Options Community Connections Fund to purchase speakers suitable for outdoor use. The £1,000 award has made a huge difference as residents can hear and enjoy the band's live performances from the comfort of their own home and at a safe distance.

Into the Spotlight has performed at care homes to delighted audiences of forty people and their support staff. The group has followed government guidelines by adhering to social distancing protocols and by using separate microphones. Staff report that the experience has positively impacted on people's general wellbeing and that residents enjoyed making

requests and listening to their favourite songs. Into the Spotlight look forward to continuing their performances once lockdown restrictions end.

"I cannot thank our volunteers enough. The positive difference they are making in these challenging times is wonderful to see and provides the social and community cohesion that underpins the purpose of our volunteering programme."

Andrew Walker, Volunteering Manager.



If you'd like to know more about volunteering for Real Life Options, please email reallifevolunteers@reallifeoptions.org



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



Into the Spotlight are a group of volunteers. They play music and sing songs.



They have visited some care homes and played music outdoors. This is so people can listen to their songs.



People who want to volunteer for Real Life Options can send us an email.

New Year, New Hobby Competition

To help inspire each other and celebrate all the new things people are trying out in 2021, we have launched an exciting new hobby competition.

For your chance to win a £50 Love2Shop voucher simply send an email to Sam Goodwin telling her about your new hobby.

samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org

The competition is open to staff and people we support. If you are a person supported by Real Life Options, include in your email to Sam which service supports you.

Everyone who sends a submission will be automatically entered into a prize draw for a chance to win a £50 Love2Shop voucher.

The competition deadline is **28th February 2021** and the 2 winners (a staff member and a person we support) will be announced in early March.



New Year, New Hobby Competition!

To help inspire each other and celebrate all the new things people are trying out in 2021, we have launched an exciting new hobby competition.

For your chance to win a £50 Love2Shop voucher simply enter by:

- ✓ **Describing your new hobby** in the comment of a related news article on Real Talk or by emailing Sam on samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org
- ✓ **Open to staff and people we support** – so for people we support please include which service they are based at in your comment/email.
- ✓ Everyone who enters will be automatically entered into a prize draw for a **chance to win a £50 Love2Shop voucher**.
- ✓ **Competition deadline is 28th February 2021** and the 2 winners (staff member and person we support) will be announced in early March.

The competition deadline is **Sunday 28th February 2021**.



We have a new competition. We would love to hear about your hobbies.



It could be anything you enjoy doing. It could be cooking, painting or a sport!



To enter the competition send an email to Sam Goodwin and tell her about your hobby.



All people who enter the competition will go into a draw and could win a fifty pound voucher.

Naseer's Taekwon-Do Black Belt Achievement

Many congratulations to Naseer from Glenrothes who has earned a 1st Dan Black Belt certificate from the esteemed Global Taekwon-Do Federation. His achievement marks years of dedication, training and focus, culminating in a prestigious accolade which less than one in every thousand participants achieve.

Naseer had to work extremely hard as the process for achieving a black belt is rigorous, involving the submission of a detailed thesis to evidence a thorough understanding of the five rules of Taekwon-Do in addition to a two hour technical session followed by the physical grading itself. Not only did this involve the destruction of boards with hands and feet, it also included physical one to one and two to one sparring, giving and responding to commands in Korean.

In preparation for the assessment, Naseer was supported by his personal staff team to develop his thesis, making use of imagery and photographs to explain his understanding of the 'five rules' of the martial art. To reduce anxiety ahead of the event, Naseer's support staff worked with him to become familiar and comfortable with what lay ahead by breaking the event down into its component parts. On the day, Naseer was cool, calm and collected as he knew just what to expect.

Understandably, Naseer's staff team are incredibly proud of what he has achieved and how far he has come. "It has taken years of training, dedication and hard work. We hope he will inspire others to achieve their goals."



"It was hard work. I didn't think I would pass, but I did. I bought a frame for my certificate. It is now on my wall above the fireplace." Naseer



Naseer enjoys doing Taekwon-Do. He has practiced Taekwon-Do for many years.



Naseer is very good at Taekwon-Do. He has been given a certificate for his hard work.



Taekwon-Do is a martial art. A martial art is a type of sport that teaches people how to be in control.



Naseer is very happy and proud of his Taekwon-Do skills

David's Goal Scoring Pays Off

Life can be daunting for people who are affected by anxiety and who lack confidence in their ability to make decisions in their day to day lives. David, who has been supported by Real Life Options since 2016, has made massive steps towards greater independence and is now much less reliant on his parents for support.

David from Newcastle, who had previously disengaged from health care services and in fact the wider community, now has the right level of support that enables him to plan his schedule in a way that suits him. Health care appointments and trips to the barbers are no longer a worry for David or his parents, who in recent years have been able to go on holiday knowing that David is happy and feels safe in his own home and in the community.

In 2018, David met Bryan, a new member of staff and together they have formed a great partnership with Bryan supporting David to meet his goals. David, who had developed a routine of visiting the same places when supported in the community, surprised everyone by saying he wanted to visit different locations with Bryan.

As difficult as lockdown restrictions have been, David has used the opportunity to explore new places to visit that were open and not busy.

David thoroughly enjoys going for long walks along the riverside, taking in the sights and talking about nature. Trips to Whitehouse Farm and Alnwick Gardens have also proved a great success. David's mum is delighted with how much his confidence has grown and loves to hear him talk about the new places his visits.



"We are so proud of David and appreciate the support he receives. Bryan has been an amazing addition to the team."
David's mum



David is happy and feels safe with support from Real Life Options.



Bryan is a new member of David's staff team. Bryan supports David in the community.



David enjoys going on long walks and seeing new things with Bryan.



David's mum likes to hear about the new places he visits.

Real Heroes Annual Conference 2020

Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, we are delighted that our annual conference went ahead this year, albeit as a virtual event.

It was fantastic to see so many staff and people we support from across the Real Life Options Group watching the streamed event live from the comfort of their own homes. This year's conference themes focussed on building confidence, capability and celebrating success.

Attendees were thrilled to hear about developments with the digital support plan roll out, progress with our best-in-class support and enablement programme and how well the Employee Journey model is being embedded across the Group.

The conference culminated in an exciting digital Real Heroes Awards ceremony incorporating the people we support as star presenters, celebrating the achievements of nominees and finalists from across our Group.

Chief Executive David Sargent concluded the day with the launch of a Commemorative Learning Fund in memory of those individuals who are no longer with us but very much in our thoughts.



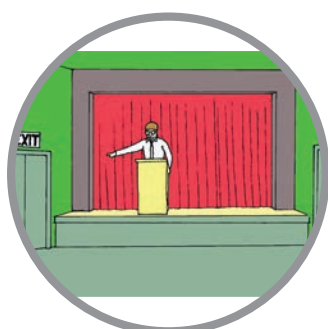
"This last year has been one highlighted by acts of heroism and sacrificial giving. Our staff have demonstrated much resilience and strength during this time, resulting in excellent care for the people we support. We did not allow the pandemic to halt progress. Instead we have used this opportunity to improve how we work together in achieving our goals."
David Sargent, CEO



Every year we have a big meeting for staff. This year it was called the Real Heroes Annual Conference.



Because of the Coronavirus, we filmed the conference and people watched it on their computers or on their phones.



Staff learned about new things to help them do a good job and provide great support.



This year, we had a Real Heroes Awards ceremony. Lots of staff and people we support got a trophy.

Building Confidence Through Volunteering

Volunteering has grown from strength to strength this year as community spirit and genuine acts of kindness have touched the lives of many.

A Real Life Options service in Glasgow was delighted when after a discussion with Volunteer Manager Nick McLaughlin, community volunteer and university graduate Mike came forward to help out with essential shopping services on behalf of people who were shielding.

Mike, who is visually impaired, does not drive and used the volunteering opportunity to push the boundaries, proving that a physical impairment is no barrier to what can be achieved. Using public transport together with google maps, Mike enjoyed navigating around the city, which helped build his confidence in his own abilities whilst making a positive difference in his community.

Mike thoroughly enjoyed supporting Real Life Options during the pandemic and continues to volunteer whilst looking for paid employment.

Described as a lovely gentleman with a great sense of humour, Mike is a great asset and a shining example that anything is possible.



"Volunteering has been great for boosting my confidence. The shopping trips allowed me to familiarise myself with new parts of the city." Mike

If you'd like to know more about volunteering for Real Life Options, please email reallifevolunteers@reallifeoptions.org



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



Mike is a volunteer in Glasgow. He helped people with their food shopping.



Mike enjoyed being a volunteer. It helped him build his confidence.



People who want to volunteer for Real Life Options can send us an email.

Gifts Galore from TV Weatherman

Michelle from Newcastle had a fantastic surprise recently when an ITV weatherman brought her a gift as a reward for being such a huge fan. Michelle loves watching the news but more so the weather section as Ross Hutchinson is her favourite presenter. Michelle loves sharing Ross's weather report with her staff team and as far as she is concerned, it is never Ross' fault when he doesn't get it quite right.

Recently, Michelle made some massive changes in her life which involved the decision to eat a healthier diet and attempt to give up smoking too. With some of the money she expects to save, Michelle would like to sponsor the Dog's Trust to help abandoned dogs.

Because Michelle is making great progress with her healthier living regime, her staff team wanted to arrange something special to say well done. Service Manager Katie Murphy sent a message to weatherman Ross via social media explaining how Michelle is one of his biggest admirers and would he be able to send a signed photograph of himself.

Ross kindly replied, explaining that whilst he didn't have a photo, he would organise a goody bag instead, dropping off the gift in person and posing for a picture. Michelle was disappointed not to meet her favourite weatherman on the

day but is delighted that he went out of his way to deliver her gift to the service office and will frame the prized photograph as soon as she is able.



"We are immensely grateful to Ross for taking the time to think of Michelle in his busy schedule. His kindness means such a lot and has made this a year to remember for all the right reasons."
Katie Murphy, Service Manager



Michelle likes watching the weather news on the television.



Michelle's favourite weatherman is called Ross.



Ross went to the service office to take a present for Michelle.



Michelle is very happy with her present and her photograph of Ross.

Christmas Card Competition Results

We held a Competition and invited the people we support to be creative and send in their designs for a Christmas card.

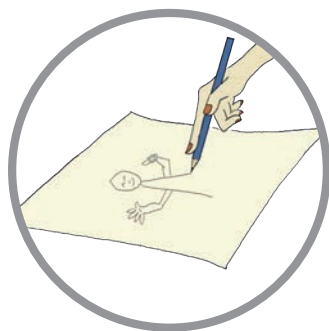
All the entries this year were amazing and brought a lot of festive cheer to everyone across the Real Life Options Group. And as a thank you, certificates of participation were sent to everyone who entered.

Huge congratulations to **Eddie Rushford** from Dunfermline for winning first place in the competition with his glittery, colourful card. Eddie won a Gold Rosette Certificate of Achievement and a £50 prize. His lovely design was made into this year's staff Christmas Card

Second place went to the people we support at Robertson Road for their combined effort Santa card, and third place goes to Marie Forrest from Lochgelly for her skiing snowman card.

Third place went to Marie Forrest from Lochgelly for her skiing snowman card.

Don't forget to check out our latest New Year, New Hobby competition on page 3.



We had a competition and asked people to design a Christmas card.



First prize went to Eddie from Dunfermline. He won £50 and a certificate.



People living at Robertson Road worked together to make a card. It won second place.



Marie from Lochgelly won third place for her skiing snowman card.

Coping with Stress



World Health
Organization

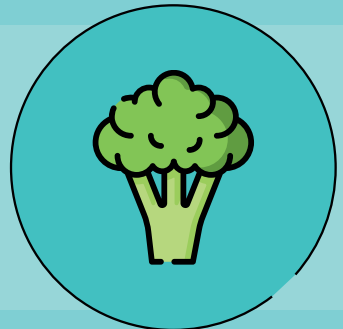
Coping with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak



It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis.

Talking to people you trust can help. Contact your friends and family.

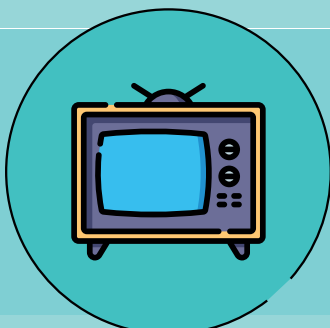
If you must stay at home, maintain a healthy lifestyle - including proper diet, sleep, exercise and social contacts with loved ones at home and by email and phone with other family and friends.



Don't use smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with your emotions.

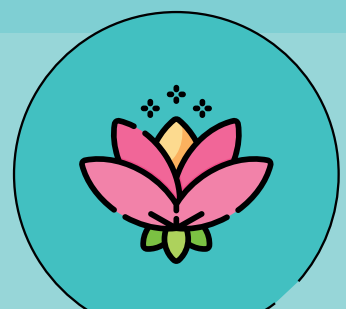
If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counsellor. Have a plan, where to go to and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required.

Get the facts. Gather information that will help you accurately determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as WHO website or, a local or state public health agency.



Limit worry and agitation by lessening the time you and your family spend watching or listening to media coverage that you perceive as upsetting.

Draw on skills you have used in the past that have helped you to manage previous life's adversities and use those skills to help you manage your emotions during the challenging time of this outbreak.



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

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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.