

Real News

Issue 109

Looking Towards a Brighter Future

Putting people and communities into the spotlight

Championing
Health Care
Rights

Canine Rescue
a Resounding
Success

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

Walking to Support Community Projects

Sponsored walk inspired by Captain Sir Tom Moore

Huge congratulations to Connor from Angus who recently raised £300 to support two local community projects. Inspired by Captain Sir Tom Moore, Connor walked 101 miles around Forfar and Arbroath. Real Life Options staff June and Graham kept Connor company along the way.

The sponsorship money is going to The Learning Tree Partnership which supports people with learning disabilities to gain skills in customer service. The second community project to benefit is Connor's local Enable Youth Group. The Group provides a platform for people to develop friendships, try new activities and learn new skills.

Connor thoroughly enjoyed spending time outdoors, seeing lovely views and spending quality time with his support staff. June and the rest of the team are very proud of his sponsorship achievement.



*"Thank you Captain Sir Tom for inspiring me to do this walk."
Connor from Angus*



Connor wanted to raise some money for two charities in his town.



Connor decided to do a sponsored walk like Captain Sir Tom Moore.



June is one of Connor's support team. She went with him on his walks.



Connor walked one hundred and one miles. People gave him three hundred pounds for the charities.

Championing Health Care Rights

Staff team and family support Fiona's rights to life-saving health care

We are immensely proud of our colleagues in Hawick for championing the health care rights of a lady they support. Fiona began experiencing health issues last year which meant a series of visits and stays in hospital. Despite everyone's best efforts, Fiona's health did not improve. As a result, she was admitted to hospital earlier this year.

Due to a rare genetic disorder, Fiona struggles with her weight. Whilst it is managed through a structured routine and planned diet, it was difficult for medical staff to apply antibiotics intravenously. Over time, Fiona's health deteriorated.

Staff who visited Fiona on a daily basis became aware that a decision had been made by the hospital to apply end of life care based on her disorder and condition. The staff team challenged this decision with the hospital and contacted Fiona's family to alert them to this potentially life-threatening situation.

Under pressure from Fiona's family to find alternative ways to help her, the hospital used ultrasound technology with successful results. Within a short time of receiving antibiotics



"I am incredibly proud of our Hawick team for their part in supporting Fiona to have a right to timely and life-saving health care. Without their intervention, the outcome might have been very different."

David Sargent, CEO

intravenously, Fiona was more alert and able to sit upright. Fiona's health is much improved and she was home in time to celebrate her birthday with family and friends.



Last year, Fiona started to feel poorly and needed to go to hospital.



Fiona needed special medicine called antibiotics to help her get better.



Fiona's staff and her family asked the hospital to find a new way to give her the medicine.



Fiona feels better. She celebrated her birthday at home with her family and friends.

Canine Rescue a Resounding Success

Providing a helping hand in the rehoming of Bella and Toby

From time to time the best laid plans need a helping hand. Real Life Options was delighted to play a small part in the adoption and rehoming of several dogs involving their safe transportation from Spain to the UK.

Last summer, Yorkshire based Paul and Erika made arrangements with a rescue centre in Spain to adopt and rehome two Beagle Cross dogs. Whilst regulatory processes such as home checks and vaccinations continued as normal, the looming Brexit transition and a change to the French authority's animal transportation procedures threatened to disrupt their plans. The main hurdle being that a DEFRA registered transporter should have a business account with Eurotunnel or the official sponsorship of a registered UK Charity.

After reviewing the situation, CEO David Sargent agreed that Real Life Options would support the endorsement of transportation permits as an official sponsor to ensure that the rescue centre's rehoming operation complied with regulatory requirements.

We are delighted to report that the crossing



"I want to express my eternal gratitude in helping us get our two dogs from Spain. We could not have done this without the kindness and charity of others and the support of Real Life Options."

Paul Moore

from Spain went without a hitch and that Bella and Toby have settled into their new home.



Bella and Toby are rescue dogs. They lived in a rescue centre in Spain.



Paul and Erika wanted to adopt the dogs and give them a new home in England.



Paul and Erika needed special papers to bring the dogs in a van to England.



Real life Options helped with the papers and now the dogs are happy in their new home.

A Heartfelt Message of Thanks

Supporting people through difficult and challenging times

Service Manager Katie Murphy and her team in Newcastle were humbled to receive a message of thanks from Michael and his sister Anne. Michael has been supported by Real Life Options for many years.

Michael loves community based activities and socialising with people. He was upset when the pandemic affected his ability to meet with his friends and family. Michael's world was further turned upside down last April when his brother Dominic caught the COVID-19 virus and passed away.



"Katie and Michael's staff team were a great support to me and my brother. With compassion and kindness, Mark, Richard, Alex, Brian and Peter supported him through his grief and have helped him cope throughout the pandemic."

"A massive thank you from the bottom of my heart to each and every person who has kept not just my brother safe, but every person they support."
Anne, Michael's sister



Anne's brother Michael is supported by Real Life Options.



Before Covid-19, Michael used to enjoy spending time with his brother Dominic.



Michael was very sad when Dominic passed away last year.



Anne wrote a letter to thank Michael's staff team for all their support.

Children Cheer Up Community Neighbours

Colourful artwork and cheerful messages lift people's spirits during lockdown

Real Life Options was delighted when St. Bartholomew Primary School in Wolverhampton agreed to a lockdown project that connected school children and members of their local community.

Volunteering Manager Andrew Walker contacted Head Teacher Rachel Kilmister with an idea to brighten up people's lives during lockdown. The school was happy to oblige and before long, students had created hundreds of pictures and messages. These were sent to a number of homes within the local area to help cheer up people who live in supported living environments. Recipients of the children's work have chosen pieces to hang on their walls and their support staff are deeply touched by the gesture.

When approached by Andrew, the idea struck a chord with Mrs. Kilmister. She felt it would be a fantastic opportunity to enrich the lives of local people and introduce the concept of volunteering and assisting others to her pupils.

Mrs. Kilmister says, "This has been an extremely challenging year for everyone, especially young people and people that need support. Hopefully colourful pictures



"Thank you to all the children for the effort that has gone into these pictures. They are truly amazing. They have put big smiles on everyone's faces and brightened our day."
Kate White, Team Leader

and letters may bring light and happiness into everyone's hearts in these difficult times. I am extremely proud of our children's enthusiasm for this project and for the hard work they do on a daily basis."



Some school children made lots of pictures and messages.



The children made the pictures and messages to cheer people up during lockdown.



People supported by Real Life Options have put the pictures and messages on their walls.



A big thank you to the children for the pictures and for their kindness.

David is Happy with His Job

Vaccination roll out goes from strength to strength

Real Life Options' Trustee and Chair David Wilkin was delighted when he was invited to have his COVID-19 vaccination. He was able to attend the clinic at short notice in response to a call which meant that a small number of Pfizer vaccines with a short expiry date did not go to waste.

David's local clinic was extremely well organised with social distancing measures and full PPE in place. Ahead of the vaccination, David was questioned about any allergies and any prescribed medication to ensure that he was able to receive the injection.

The process was over within minutes and after a short rest, he was allowed to drive home. Other than a sore arm, David has not experienced any other side effects however he was made aware that this can vary from person to person.

David joins over 82% of our staff who are eligible and who have had vaccinations, with more waiting for their appointments to come through.

"It was fantastic to see people chatting away so enthusiastically about receiving the vaccine; some who have been self-isolating for a long time."



"The process was highly organised and any reservations that I might have had were soon put to rest. A massive thank you to the NHS and those volunteers who are playing their part in the roll out process."



David Wilkin is a Trustee and the Chair of the Real Life Options Group.



Earlier this year, David had a vaccination to stop him getting ill with Covid-19.



David said his arm was a little bit sore after the injection but he felt OK.



David says a big thank you to all the NHS staff and volunteers.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Be the star of your own video ★ ...and share your skills! ★

We're looking for people we support, staff and volunteers to **create short videos on a number of different topics to help keep people entertained at home**. So whether you fancy yourself as the next Joe Wicks sharing some exercise tips, want to showcase yourself singing, host an arts and crafts lesson or wish to share some yummy recipes on your own cooking video, **we would love to hear from you**.

Help others - Grow in confidence - Stay healthy and active



These videos can easily be filmed in service on a smart mobile phone and there are some special video tips provided for your reference. We will need consent forms for every person featured in the video as we plan to create a video library on YouTube. If a person we support would like to be involved but doesn't have mental capacity to consent, then they can narrate/show different steps but please ensure their faces are not shown.

For more information please contact your local Volunteering Manager:

Andrew Walker, Volunteering and Social Value Manager – England
07778 899528, andrew.walker@reallifeoptions.org

Nick McLaughlin, Volunteering and Social Value Manager – Scotland
07789 938134, nick.mclaughlin@reallifeoptions.org



A Recipe for Success!

Helping develop and support people's life skills

James in Edinburgh is a massive Scooby-Doo fan. He was delighted to discover that a Christmas present video included the recipe for making his very own Scooby Snacks. Gary, who volunteers at James' service twice a week, was more than happy to put his catering skills to good use when James asked for his support.

The day before the baking session, James, with support from his staff team, shopped for the ingredients. Gary and James worked side by side so that Gary could show and James could learn.

Gary talked through the process whilst making the snacks whilst James watched and copied the baking process using his own utensils and ingredients. Once the delicious snacks were out of the oven and cool enough to eat, James very generously shared his tasty treats with his housemates.

Since Gary has been volunteering at the service, James' cooking and baking skills have greatly improved. He loves choosing what to bake and enjoys greater independence by shopping for his own ingredients and making his own food.



"Gary has made a real difference to the service and is a valued member of the team. Everyone enjoys his visits and he has certainly helped develop James's life skills."

Keith Anderson, Service Manager

If you would like to know more about becoming a Real Life Volunteer, visit the 'Get Involved' section of our website or email reallifevolunteers@reallifeoptions.org.



James got a Scooby-Doo video for Christmas. It came with a recipe for making biscuits.



James went to the shop to buy the ingredients. He asked for support to make the biscuits.



Gary is a volunteer who knows how to cook. He helped James to follow the recipe.



James is very proud of his baking skills. He shared the tasty biscuits with his friends.

Best Wishes on Heather's Retirement

A massive thank you for community support spanning three decades

Real Life Options sends very best wishes to Heather Yuill from Livingston who retires shortly after a successful and happy career supporting people in her local community. Heather began supporting people with learning disabilities thirty years ago, initially in a hospital setting and then in a supported living environment.

Heather saw first-hand how the move into their own home vastly improved the quality of life of the people she supported. It enabled them to grow in confidence as they gained new life experiences. From regular outings to local cafes, gala days and holidays abroad, Heather is delighted to have played her part in making a real difference in people's lives.

Heather has nothing but praise for her Real Life Options colleagues and is extremely proud of the 'very good' and 'excellent' ratings her service holds.



"I will miss everyone when I retire and have some happy memories to look back on. I'm looking forward to moving to a new home on the coast and travelling to warmer destinations when it is safe to do so. Heather Yuill"



Heather from Livingston has been supporting people for thirty years.



Heather has supported people in their home and in their community.



Heather retires soon. This means that she will stop doing her job.



Heather will miss everyone. She is looking forward to living by the sea when she retires.

A Poem for a Brighter 2021

An uplifting video from the people we support and staff in Broomfield



Our amazing Broomfield team together with some of the people we support created a heartfelt video to remind us that during lockdown, we are all **#inthistgether**.

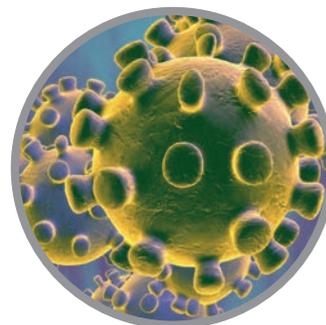
The video poem contains their reflections of 2020 and the pandemic, and their hopes for a brighter 2021.

To watch and hear the video, visit:

<https://youtu.be/5ZIO8fx90c>



Some of the people we support and staff made a video.



In the video, people talk about how their lives changed last year because of Covid-19.



In the video, people talk about what they look forward to when lockdown ends.



You can watch the video on You Tube. Ask your staff team if you would like support to watch it.

ASCEND Graduation - Class of 2020

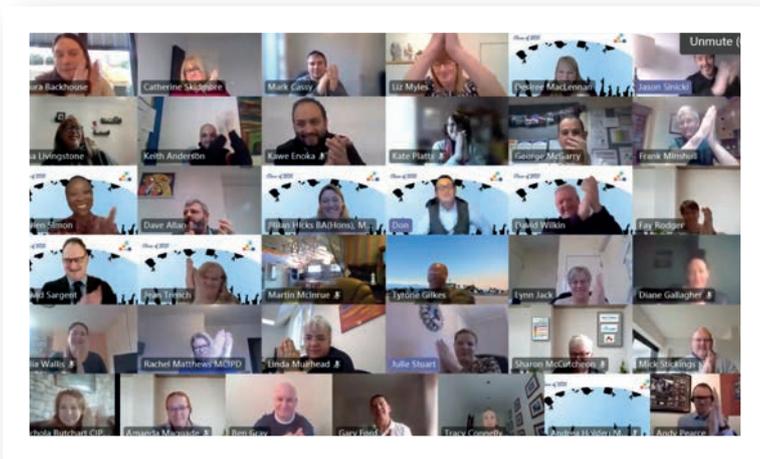
Leadership and development programme concludes with online celebration

Over 40 leaders across the Real Life Options Group marked the conclusion of a year-long development programme with an online celebratory graduation ceremony.

Graduates shared reflections on what they have learnt and how they have applied their new-found knowledge within their work environment. Directors of Operations for England and Scotland praised participants for their commitment to the programme and acknowledged how it has, without doubt, contributed to exemplar leadership particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Peer of the Year was jointly awarded to **Mark Cassy** – IT Operations Manager and **Susan Griffiths** – Support and Enablement Partner. The Outstanding Achievement Award went to **Julie Stuart** – Service Manager of 1st Homecare Dumfries.

Head of Talent Development Jill Hicks, who was instrumental in bringing the ASCEND programme to life, thanked participants for their attendance and partners On Track Learning for their contribution in delivering the course content.



"It is with genuine heartfelt pride that I am delighted at the success of the programme and the part it plays in being a truly person-centred organisation." Jill Hicks



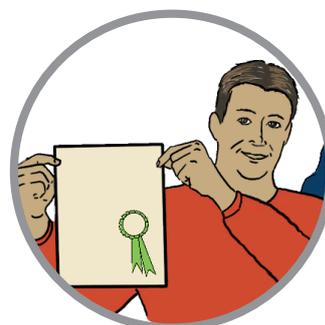
Real Life Options has a special learning course called Ascend.



The course helps people find out how to be good Managers.



There was an online ceremony to celebrate the end of the Ascend course.



Everyone got a certificate and some people got a special mention for being great students.

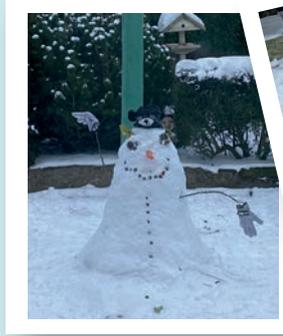
SNOW DAY FUN



Mark and the Mohican in Glasgow



Keith in Edinburgh



Martin's Snowmen Collection in Angus

Maureen with 'Jamie' in Newcastle



Alistair in Angus

Connor in Angus



Chloe and Amy in Glenrothes

Team Lilywynd

Team An-Carina

Team Dunfermline



George, David, Sharon and Katie in Glasgow



Team Kingsmore



Real Life Options Welcomes New Director

Kate Platts joins as Director of Finance and Resources

Real Life Options is pleased to announce the appointment of Kate Platts as Director of Finance and Resources.

Chartered Accountant Kate brings a wealth of experience from senior roles within private and third sector organisations where she has contributed towards organisational efficiencies and business growth.

Inspired by the organisation's ambition for the future and its approach to person centred support and enablement, Kate will focus on sustainable strategies and opportunities for creating surplus that will be reinvested for the benefit of the people we support.

With oversight of the Finance, Payroll, Estates, Marcoms and Tendering functions, Kate looks forward to guiding her teams to be actively involved in positive transformation and contributing towards organisational success.



"I am confident that Kate's expertise, energy and leadership will be a great asset as we drive excellent and sustainable person-centred support within our organisation and our sector." David Sargent, Chief Executive Officer.



Real Life Options has a new Director. She is called Kate.



Kate's job is to look after the Charity's money. Kate has lots of people in her team to help her.



Some people in Kate's team look after money and some people look after buildings.



Kate wants to help her team to do the best they can for the people we support.

New Year, New Hobby Competition

The competition results are in!

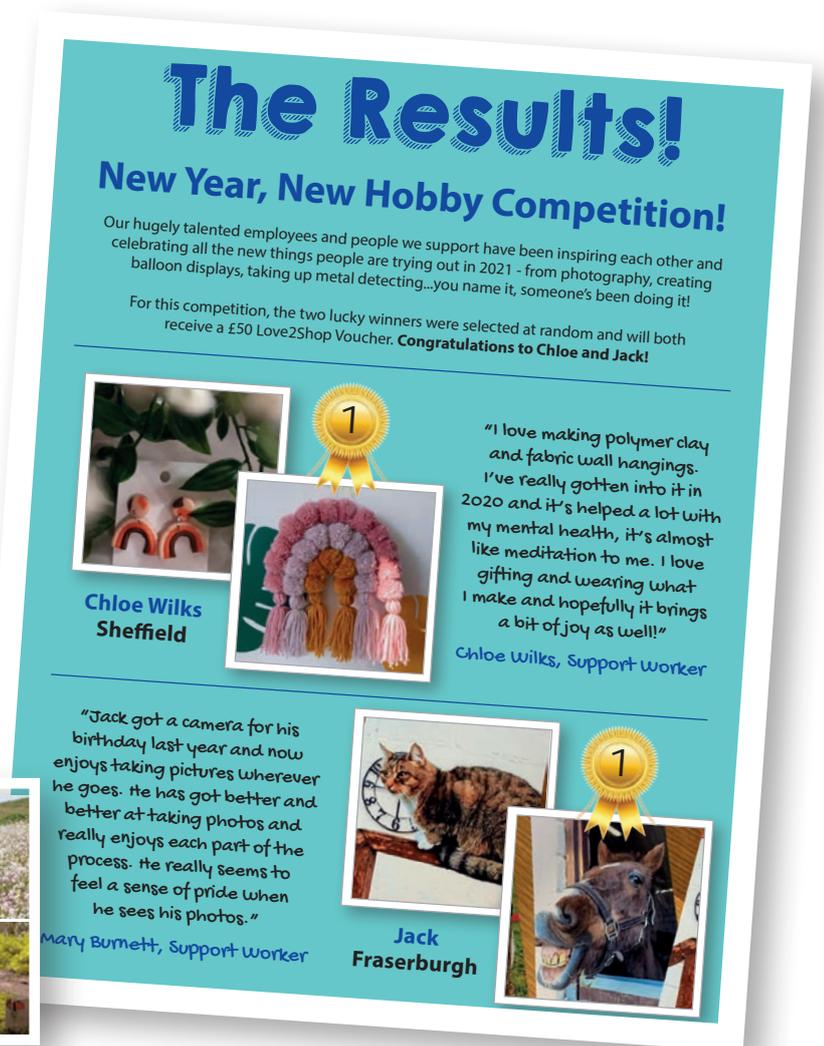
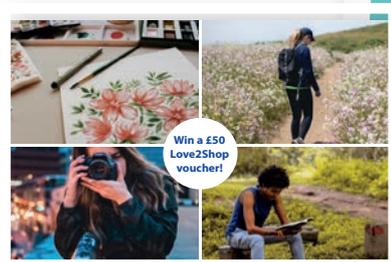
Thank you to everyone who took part in our New Year, New Hobby Competition.

Our hugely talented employees and people we support have been inspiring each other and celebrating all the new things people are trying out in 2021.

From photography, creating balloon displays, taking up metal detecting... you name it, someone's been doing it!

For this competition, the two lucky winners were selected at random and both received a £50 Love2Shop Voucher.

Congratulations to **Chloe**, a Support Worker from Sheffield, and **Jack** from Fraserburgh!



We had a competition and asked people to tell us about their new hobbies.



Lots of people have started new hobbies. Some people take photographs and some make things.



Jack is from Fraserburgh. He won a prize. His hobby is photography.



Chloe is from Sheffield. She won a prize. Her hobby is making decorations and gifts.

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 Sam or Sharon in the Marketing and Communications Team.**



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Sam and Sharon write Real News Magazine for people to read news and stories.



You can tell Sam or Sharon your story by emailing or phoning them 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.