

SAFEGUARDING



Corporate Safeguarding

Annual Report 2024



Our Commitment

Real Life Options Group is a person-centred organisation committed to protecting the health, wellbeing, and human rights of those we support, ensuring they live free from harm, abuse, and neglect. We prioritise making the voices of the people we support central to our mission of empowerment and safeguarding. To achieve the highest standards in care and support, the Real Life Options Group has established a Corporate Safeguarding Group that works on behalf of our Board. This report offers detailed insights into how we continuously ensure the safety of everyone within our organisation.

Ensuring We Get It Right

Our safeguarding commitment last year was centred on getting it right for the people we support and as an organisation we have stayed true to these values.

Over the last 12 months we have:

- **Reviewed our internal processes**, revamping our weekly and quarterly safeguarding meetings to ensure processes remain effective and transparent
- **Implemented a new referral and assessment process** to ensure supported individuals who are new to our organisation transition in a manner that promotes their safety and wellbeing at all times
- **Further developed our 'My Voice' Initiative** to ensure our supported individuals continue to be a pivotal influence in everything we do as an organisation
- **Actively advancing our Restraint Reduction Strategy** in close collaboration with stakeholders to empower the individuals we support.
- **Remained dedicated to working with all stakeholders** to maintain the health and wellbeing of our workforce

Our Progress over the last 12 months

Our New Corporate Safeguarding Group

The Real Life Options Group is proud of its lifelong commitment to ensuring that the individuals we support can:

- Exercise freedom and autonomy with minimal and unwanted interference from others
- Overcome obstacles to accessing places, people and services that are available to everybody
- Reduce or remove restrictions imposed by others to deal with the day to day challenges associated with additional support needs

Our newly revised quarterly Corporate Safeguarding Group meetings will further support and embed these values by prioritising the following;

Purpose

To ensure the People we Support are safeguarded against harm, mistreatment and neglect at all times.

To ensure that any disrespect for the rights of the People we Support is appropriately challenged and managed so that individuals can live the life they choose.

Remit

To identify corporate priorities and agree areas of Safeguarding/Adult Support and Protection development, ensuring any lessons learnt are robustly embedded across the Group.

To ensure that policies and practice reflect current legislation and best practice guidance.

To ensure staff are appropriately trained and informed in relation to Safeguarding/Adult Support and Protection.

Accountability

To review data and collate information arising from safeguarding incidents and restrictive practice events for the purpose of reducing and where relevant, prioritising safeguarding concerns and restraint reduction actions.

To support the development and review of preventative reduction strategies in relation to safeguarding events and restrictive practice.

To ensure there are robust processes in place in relation to the vetting and barring of staff.

Achievements

Restrictive Practice and Restraint Reduction

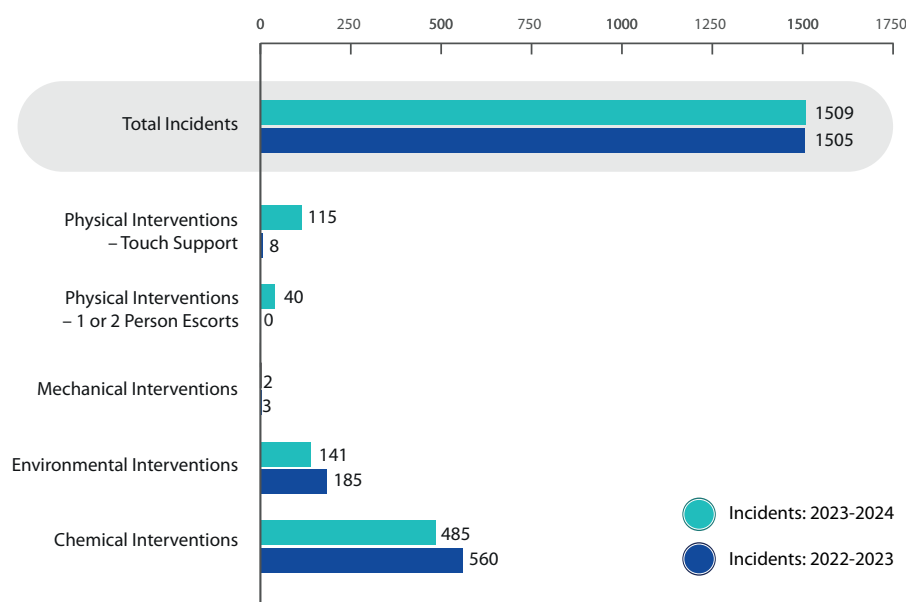
We recognise that it is our duty of care to ensure people using our services are not subjected to trauma as a result of restrictive practices. We have robust reporting systems that capture data on all restrictive interventions ensuring lessons can be learnt following each incident and that each person subjected to or carrying out a restrictive intervention are provided with the opportunity to receive a debrief.

During 2023/ 2024 we established a Restrictive Practice Working Group. The group members include:

- Positive Behaviour Support Partners
- Supported people who have lived experience
- Risk and Compliance Partners
- Front line staff

We are committed to reducing restrictive practices

The Restrictive Practice Working Group have worked closely with operational teams focusing on defining, recording and monitoring restrictive interventions during behaviours some may find challenging. This, coupled with detailed and targeted positive behaviour support planning has led to the results illustrated in figure 1.



Note: Figure1 shows all interventions reduced within the two years, except for physical interventions and a marginal increase in incidents. The increase is due to better operational understanding of the definition of physical restraint and more accurate reporting and recording.

Figure1: Incident Comparison 2023-2024 to 2022-2023

The Restrictive Practice Working Group have also completed a benchmarking exercise using the Restraint Reduction Network: Reducing Restrictive Practices Checklist. The results from this exercise have supported the development of our Restraint Reduction Strategy. Figure 2 depicts the results of this exercise, whilst figure 3 and 4 denotes our strengths and areas for development.

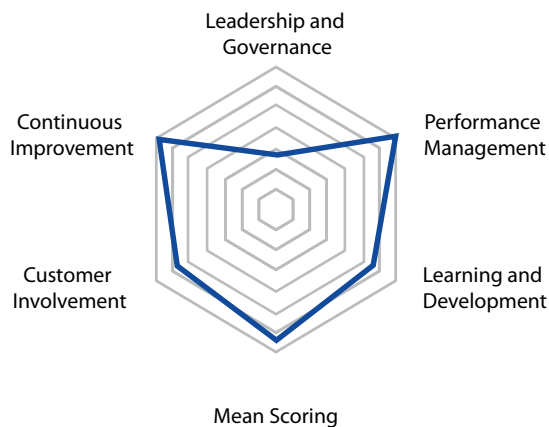


Figure 2: Reducing Restrictive Practices Checklist Score



Areas of strength:

Performance management
Continuous improvement
Personalised support

Figure 3: Strength



Areas for development:

Leadership and governance
Learning and development
Customer involvement

Figure 4: Development

In addition to this the group will be completing a further benchmarking exercise in relation to blanket restrictions in all our functions. This will support the further development of the strategy and ensure we have a systematic approach to improve our organisational culture and influence the reduction of blanket restrictions.

Referral and Assessment Process

Last year we completed a full review and refresh of our Referral and Assessment Process. In previous years we had some difficult decisions to make as an organisation, especially when the complexities of individual support needs had not been adequately highlighted or shared with ourselves during the transition of supported individuals, and it was essential that this did not happen again in the future.

As a result, our Referral and Assessment Process is now more robustly informed, with an effective referral process that encompasses a detailed needs assessment that signposts the assessor to any specialist assessments that may be required as part of the overall assessment. In addition to this we now have a process which highlights areas of risks that may need to be addressed via our internal risk panel of suitably skilled senior managers.

Prior to the implementation of our new referral and assessment procedure Locality Managers were selected to pilot the process with new people being referred to the Real Life Options Group.

After piloting the new procedure Darren a Locality Manager said:

"The new Referral Assessment Process will safeguard people being referred to us as it supports and directs managers to carry out a full risk assessment for the individual. The risk panel is great, as it supports decision making as a part of a team and avoids situations where a person's support is at risk of breaking down. Which we know can create further issues for the person being supported."

"The process allows us to prepare sufficiently to meet the person's needs building a person-centred support package around the person to ensure they are supported to have a good quality of life and reduce the risk of them engaging in behaviour described as challenging from the onset, thus reducing the risk of safeguarding concerns, the use of restrictive practices and the support breaking down."

We have publicly made a pledge to the **Restraint Reduction Network**

We have identified our **top three areas of priority** which we will be working towards in the next 12 months.

Restraint Reduction Network
Member

CASE STUDY

Developing Communication Skills, Enhancing Quality of Life and Reducing Behaviour described as Challenging

Peter lives in one of our residential care homes. He has a long history of engaging in property damage to escape situations he finds difficult. As a result of this, engagement in meaningful tasks were minimal and PRN (as required) medication would be administered regularly.

The Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Team worked closely with Peter and his support team to develop functional alternative skills to those perceived as challenging. Through a functional behaviour assessment, the team identified that Peter would use property damage to escape new tasks and activities, or those he found difficult.

Peter already used some basic Makaton. It was agreed with the team that he should be supported to develop his communication skills further. As escape was the function of his behaviour it was agreed that teaching him to sign, help and finish, would reduce the need for him to use socially insignificant behaviour to escape tasks. Peter mastered signing help and finish quickly. As a result of this he was able to learn how to make his bed within weeks without using property damage to escape the situation. If he needed help, he would be prompted to sign help and if he needed a break, he would be prompted to sign finish. Within nine days Peter was signing independently.

Peter's confidence grew quickly, and he and the support team are now more open to trying new things and learning new skills. There has also been a reduction in property damage and his PRN medication is now discontinued.

The individual's name has been changed to protect their anonymity

Developing
Communication
Skills

Enhancing
Quality of Life

Reducing
Behaviour
described as
challenging

Health and Wellbeing

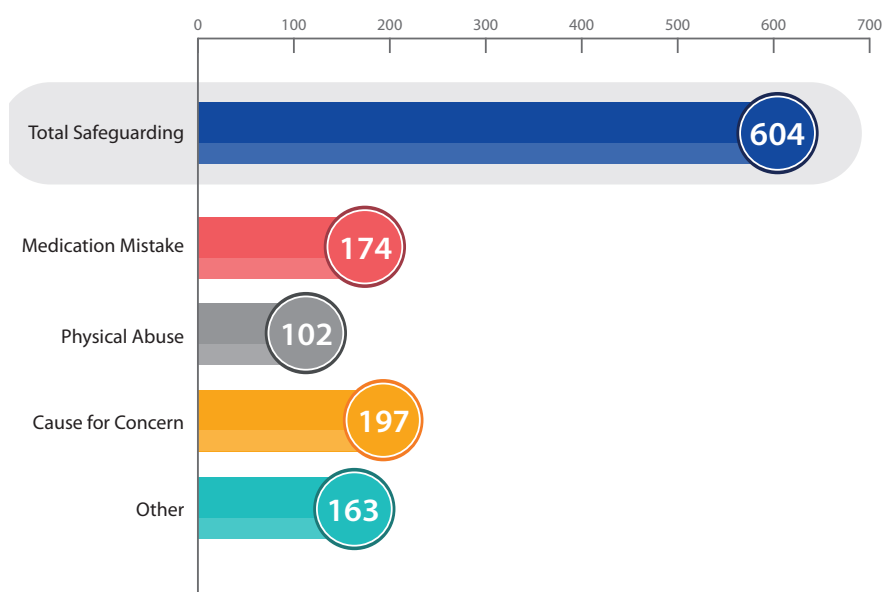
To safeguard the continuous delivery of quality services we appreciate that our staff are best placed to achieve high standards when they are equipped and supported to maintain their own health and wellbeing. As a result, it is critical to our organisation that our staff and their families have access to a robust Employee Assistance Programme. Therefore, as an organisation we prioritise the continual development of this resource, year on year.

In addition, we have a planned calendar of national health campaigns and our staff can also refer to the large library of guidance and support we have made available from renowned health organisations and government resources.

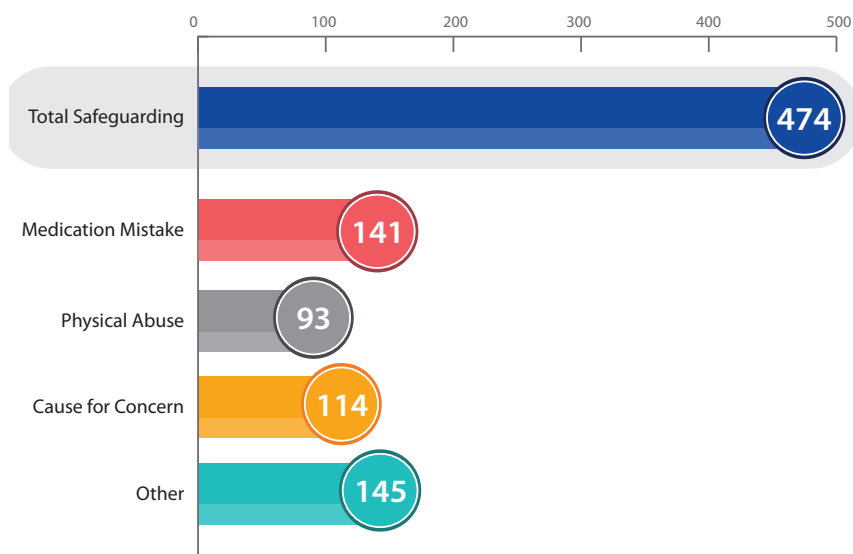
Our Safeguarding Year in Numbers

Below is a breakdown of all safeguarding events experienced in the organisation within the 2023-2024 financial year:

Safeguarding Events 2023-2024



Safeguarding Events 2022-2023



Our Safeguarding Year in Numbers

Note: It should be remembered when viewing these figures that some safeguarding events will span multiple categories.

As illustrated there has been a slight increase in the total number of safeguarding events. The increase / decrease for each category is highlighted below:

Category	2022-2023 Total	2023 -2024 Total	Percentage increase or decrease	▲ ▼
Total Safeguarding	468	604	29.06%	▲
Medical Mistake	141	174	23.40%	▲
Physical Abuse	93	102	9.68%	▲
Cause for Concern	114	197	72.81%	▲
Other	145	163	12.41%	▲

Although there has been an increase in all areas, cause for concern is the main category that drives the upward trend. There are multiple factors contributing to this trend, however the main factors for this increase include:

- Multiple alerts arising from safeguarding concerns relating to the behaviour of one supported individual
- A misunderstanding in one service of what constitutes a cause for concern, leading to multiple inaccurate alerts
- Alerts arising in relation to individuals, who following a transition process, are now no longer supported by our organisation

Medication

From the information above it can be seen that medication errors have also continued to rise throughout the last year. However, in the most part this trend has been driven by only three of our localities and we are now starting to see that additional internal support from our Clinical Compliance Partner, coupled with a more robust medication administration process is having a very positive impact in the reduction of numbers in these areas. However It is important to note that although comparisons across the full breadth of Health and Social care can be difficult to plot, as an organisation our error numbers are still well below what is seen to be the national average and this will undoubtedly provide us with that stable platform to support the year on year reduction of medication errors going forward.

some
safeguarding
events WILL
span multiple
categories

there are three
main contributing
factors to the
upward '**cause
for concern**'
trend

our **Clinical
Compliance
Partner** is having
VERY a positive
impact

My Voice

In 2023 the My Voice group conducted a My Wellbeing survey that looked to gauge the feelings among the People we Support in relation to safeguarding them and their interests.

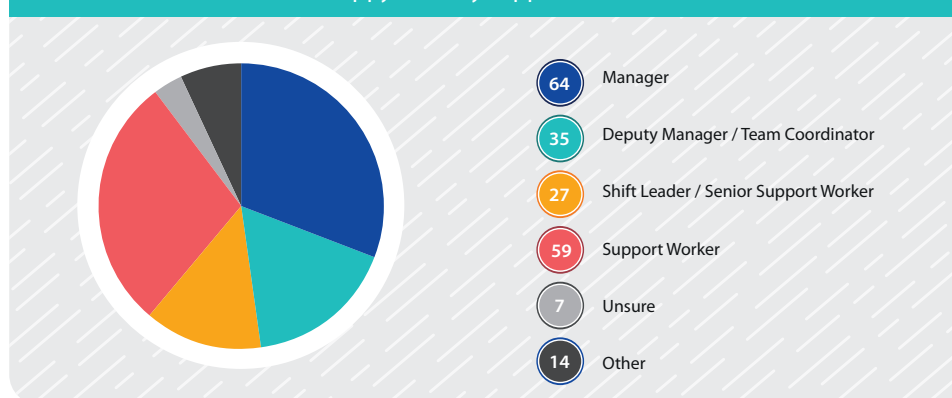
In total 202 people supported by Real Life Options took part and were asked to reply "Always", "Sometimes", "Rarely" or "Never" to the following statements:



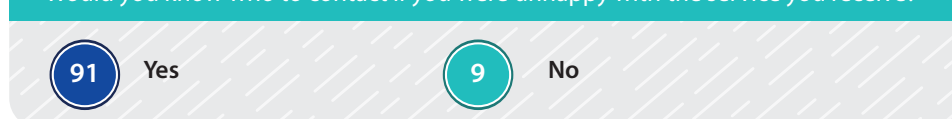
Survey Responses	Always (%)	Sometimes (%)	Rarely (%)	Never (%)
" I am supported to feel safe "	91	9	0	0
" I am supported to know my rights " *	83	12	1	0
" I am supported to recognise harm or abuse "	87	10	1	2
" I am supported to know how to keep other people safe "	85	11	3	1
" My support involves my guardian, family or advocate when needed "	85	10	1	4
" I feel listened to "	80	19	1	0

* 4% didn't understand the question

" Who would I tell if I was unhappy with my support? "



" Would you know who to contact if you were unhappy with the service you receive? "



It is important to us as an organisation that we continue to listen to and act on any feedback we receive from the individuals we support and as a result we are currently working with key stakeholders to agree both local and corporate actions to address our survey results.



Invasive Practice

Over the last twelve months our Clinical Compliance Partner in conjunction with key internal and external stakeholders has been working on the implementation of Invasive Practice Governance, that will compliment and support our Invasive Practice framework.

This framework is built on extensive research into best practice and provides a learning platform for staff and management teams to ensure the wellbeing and safety of the individuals we support. A snapshot of our extensive work to date includes:

- Enhanced safer admission/discharge from hospital processes
- Falls prevention and management toolkit
- Service specific invasive procedure/medication training
- Head injury protocol
- Supporting Medication in Social Care Settings: Assess the Assessor Competence training for all service management teams
- Postural Care: Training module and related guidance

And further improvement work planned for 2024/2025 includes:

- The robust review of our Medication Policy
- The development of a High Risk Alerts Procedure
- Finalising our Soft Signs of Illness Awareness Guidance
- The compilation of a Dysphagia/aspiration/choking 'at risk' register
- Introducing Service specific Dysphagia training

Future Plans – Safeguarding Development

Future safeguarding outcome initiatives for 2024/2025:

- Further develop our safeguarding digital reporting platform, using analytical data to support the reduction of medication errors across the group
- Fully embed our Restraint Reduction Strategy, with a priority focus on the reduction of blanket restrictions
- Refresh our Volunteering Strategy, embedding due diligence processes that support safe and secure volunteer placements throughout the organisation
- Complete our IT Strategy development and modernisation programme, to ensure our IT infrastructure remains non-intrusive and maximises the use of safe technology to support good governance
- Complete our Transformation Policy Review
- Further develop internal strategies to ensure safeguarding is at the heart of any service development or commercial strategies

Last year, we published our new style Safeguarding Report on our website, to provide an overview of our safeguarding governance with people we support, their families and carers, staff and external stakeholders. In addition to this, and for full transparency we also sent the report electronically to relevant external bodies such as commissioning teams and local authorities to prove our commitment to ensuring that the people we support live a life free from abuse or neglect.

This year we will take the same approach, we will share this report and build on lessons learnt which is a vital part of our global safeguarding commitment.

Our Promise

We are committed to putting people first: to empower the people we support and to provide professional, personalised services that recognise each person as being unique. Our priorities are centred on the requirement to take account of the voice and lived experience of people we support in ways that influence services and planning at all levels in the organisation. Our staff and teams challenge one another to do better, to learn and to aspire for more. As an organisation we will continue to strive for excellence in how we support people in their homes and communities.



Real Life Options

a real choice | a real voice | a real difference

David Wandless House
A1 Business Park
Knottingley Road
Knottingley
West Yorkshire
WF11 0BU

01977 781800
info@reallifeoptions.org

www.reallifeoptions.org



Part of the Real Life Options Group



1st
Homecare

