

Real News

Jul - Sept 2016

Riding High

Discover the benefits of
therapeutic horse riding

Real Hero
Award Winners
Announced

Fun Times at
It's a Knockout
Tournament

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

Welcome

Welcome to the July - September edition of Real News. Our regular magazine is your opportunity to contribute and find out more about what is going on around Real Life Options.

This issue is jam packed full of exciting news, including revealing the winners of the Real Life Hero Awards as well as finding out who was successful in getting the David Wandless Training Bursary. You'll also gain a glimpse into the fun It's a Knockout tournament and discover the benefits of therapeutic horseriding.

As always, please do let me know your wonderful stories for future issues. Plus, if you're a person we support who would like to get involved in Real News I'd love to hear from you - so please do get in touch!

I hope you enjoy your read.

Sam Goodwin, Editor



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Stay up to date

Keep up with all the latest news on Facebook, Twitter and our website.

- /RealLifeOptions
- @RealLifeOptions
- www.reallifeoptions.org

Got news? Get in touch!

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What's New?

Be Inspired by the Summer of Sport

Time to jump up off the sofa and get active

With the 2016 Olympics and Paralympics hitting the screen over Summer there's been more live sport on TV than you could shake a bat at! So it's time to be inspired, jump up off the sofa and start doing something active.

There's a whole host of great reasons why having an active lifestyle is good for you, including:

- Improved health and mental well-being
- Increased independence
- A boost in self esteem
- Reduced stress
- Enhanced co-ordination

Many people we support have been leading the way in being active, such as Danny's sponsored walk (page 9), Philip's horse riding (page 11) and everyone who took part in the It's a Knock-out tournament (page 7).

Another great example is Mick, a person we support from Teesside who has achieved fantastic results since deciding to get fitter. He has successfully learnt how to cycle and has worked his way up to cycling distances of over 10km. Plus he can often be found striding up Roseberry Topping, the second largest hill on the North York Moors (at over 1,000 feet).



Discover a fun, new way of getting active

Real Life Options supports the Together We Will campaign ran by the English Federation of Disability Sport which aims to empower disabled people to be more active. The campaign revealed that psychological barriers play the biggest role in preventing disabled people taking part in sport and seven out of ten people want to be more active. So hot on the heels of the inspiring Paralympics, now would be a perfect time to encourage each other to try something new and active.



You can also check out inclusive gyms and events on the **English Federation of Disability Sport** website: www.efds.co.uk



Emma at It's a Knockout



Philip horse riding



Danny and Aileen's sponsored walk

Real Hero Award Winners Announced!

Every year Real Life Options takes great joy in celebrating the amazing, inspirational people who have been making a difference across the charity

We take great pride in all our staff, community champions and people we support - all of them are stars in their own right. But our Real Heroes Awards recognise the outstanding individuals and groups who have gone the extra mile and demonstrated that they share similar beliefs and values to Real Life Options and have helped to make a significant difference in improving the quality of life for the people we support.

The awards acknowledge their humanity, their contribution to the local community and their willingness to go above and beyond to best meet the individual needs of the people we support.

Congratulations to all our winners, runners up and nominees.



The Darts Team from Hartlepool



Alan and Donna



Mario, Azra and Anthea



Michelle and Tracy



Lynn and Christine



Liz and David



Well done to George Fidoe and the Darts Team (Janet, Sue, Beverley and Margaret) who went on to win first and second place in the National Real Hero Awards.



National Winner George Fidoe

Head Office

1st Winner: Mario Caswell
Managed the whole of the budget preparation by himself, covering for his colleague on maternity leave. Delayed his exams to meet work commitments and never missed a deadline. Has prepared board papers and budget presentations that far exceed expectations and reduced workload.

2nd Runner Up: Anthea Sully
Going above and beyond to help others in the organisation by going the extra mile to contribute to various projects. She always remains a constant source of enthusiasm and inspiration, never letting any personal challenges get in the way of her happy disposition.

North East England

National Runner Up
1st Winners: Beverley Cave, Janet Grylls, Sue Linsley and Margaret Oliver
Local darts team who invited people we support to join the team and compete together equally in the league. They are very understanding, always act with dignity and respect and have been really inclusive, enabling the two supported ladies to feel relaxed and welcome.

2nd Runners Up: Lisa Livingstone and Lindsey Edgell
Have both been working above and beyond their station, completing work to a very high standard on behalf of managers across the area and ensuring that support plans and tools are all completed comprehensively.

North East and Yorkshire

1st Winners: Michelle Corner, Rachel Watson, Claire Gibson, Annette Peirson, Jude Hogan and Diane Chapman

Went out of their way and put in their own time to help organise a big 40th birthday party for a lady we support, complete with a disco, face painting and lots of food that they made themselves.

2nd Runner Up: Donna Monghan
For taking an exemplary approach to organising new community activities for the people we support, including incorporating iPads and story boards. She helps to enrich the lives of the people we support, increase their confidence and self esteem and she has a great attention to detail.

Birmingham, Mid and South

1st Winner: Dawn Long
A highly respected, extremely hardworking team member. She has worked diligently to help ensure a happy, effective team during times of change and efficiently ensured that all paperwork was in order to enable the people we support to meet their goals and lead fulfilling lives. She also helped a colleague cope during a time of grievance, proving to be a pillar of support.

2nd Runners Up: Coventry Team
For consistently going above and beyond the call of duty and providing an exceptional level of care and support. The whole team fully embody the values associated with Real Life Options, going out of their way to ensure the needs of the people we support are always prioritised first above everything.

Central Scotland

National Winner
1st Winner: George Fidoe
Served as a loyal, long-standing member of the Glenrothes outreach team for over a decade until the reoccurrence of a brain tumour. He has since returned as a volunteer and was pivotal in relaunching and chairing the Fife's Service User Forum. He puts their needs at the forefront of everything and has enabled people to grow in confidence and speak up in the forum.

2nd Runner Up: Julie Strachan
An exceptional Support Worker who has greatly contributed to the lives of the people we support over the past 16 years, always treating people with respect and dignity helping them to progress. Recently due to a medical condition Julie has had to retire and she will be greatly missed by everyone at all her services.

North East Scotland

1st Winners: Portlethen Team
Recently the service was over half a staff team down for 3-4 months during the winter period, everyone in the Portlethen team was absolutely amazing. They rallied together to ensure that the level of support remained outstanding and that no people we support were affected by the changes. Their steadfast commitment has been exceptional.

2nd Runner Up: Kimberley Logie
Absolutely stepped up when for a period of 3-4 months there was no Service Manager in her service and then went on to be a very valuable member of the team showing the new Manager the ropes once in place. She always went above and beyond to share her knowledge even though she was shortly due to go on maternity leave.

Real Hero Awards continued

West Scotland



Winner: David McLean

A very compassionate and considerate individual who has gone above the call of duty caring for a person we support with health problems in hospital. He went out of his way to keep the family informed and showed extreme compassion, visiting the hospital in his own time and acting as an advocate.



Runner Up: DJ Robert

A local DJ/entertainer who keeps everyone entertained and smiling and always joins in with the people we support at discos, karaoke nights and game nights. People we support say, "Robert plays good music, makes us laugh, is always there every week and never lets us down."

Mid Scotland



Winner: Christine Bell

Christine has 17 years experience of working in the same service, is very supportive to the staff team and well liked by everyone. She is reliable, committed, uncomplaining and has never had a day off sick! She has dealt with recent structure changes that affected her role very professionally and always helps provide excellent support with paperwork.



Runner Up: John Thompson

An exceptional driver/escort who always goes out of his way to include the people we support and make their journeys enjoyable. He is always smiling, is very approachable and loves making conversation with his passengers. He is a particular favourite of Scott, a person we support, who always arrives smiling and laughing when he sees John.

1st Homecare



Winner: Sheena Bell

An exemplary Support Worker who always inspires others and cheers them up. Always reliable and punctual, she carries out all her work in an effective, caring manner providing an outstanding quality of care. Has dealt with a recent cancer diagnosis with great humility and strength, always remaining cheerful and inspiring others.



Runner Up: Linda Donohow

Went out of her way to provide a new person we support with furniture and belongings when he joined Real Life Options with nothing but the clothes on his back. She brought items from her own home, hunted round charity shops and even sourced furniture from friends. She went the extra mile to make him feel valuable and wanted as a person.

It's Safe to Speak Out!

0800 032 7333

Your Confidential Whistle Blowing Hotline is a safe way for you to report any examples of poor practice or misconduct.



Fire Safety Talk Sparks Burning Interest

Service User Forum invites local Fire Officer to learn how to reduce fire hazards

People we support in Newcastle were thrilled at their recent Service User Forum to meet a real Fire Officer and learn all about fire safety. Suzanne Johnson from Byker Fire Station attended the forum and spoke about house fires and what people can do to keep their homes safe. She also brought along an assortment of props and told stories about how fires had started.

The engaging talk encouraged a good deal of interaction with lots of input from the crowd. People were keen to share about how they keep their home safe, such as checking their smoke alarms every week, having electrical items PAT tested, avoiding overloaded plugs and ensuring everything is turned off before they go out.

Suzanne led an interesting discussion about what to do if there ever was a fire and insightful contributions included Anjum saying "go straight outside" and Michael John, Helen and Paul saying the next step is to "phone the fire brigade on 999 and tell them your name and address."

The talk ended with Fire Officer Suzanne handing out a useful 'Fire Safety in the Home' booklet to everyone and explaining that if you contact your local fire station they can come out and chat to you in your home, check your smoke alarms and help you make a personal emergency plan for your home. Anjum and Vicky explained that they had already done this and said they thought it was a good idea and was really helpful.



Fire Officer Suzanne explains fire hazards.



Learning more about fire safety

"Everyone really enjoyed getting involved - looking at the props, listening to stories and asking questions," said Katie Murphy, Team Coordinator. "It was really interesting and got some of the staff thinking about fire safety in their own homes as well."



GRAHAM FISHERS
It's a **KNOCKOUT**
International

Fun, fun, fun at It's a Knockout

People we support and staff enjoy themselves at exciting carnival tournament

Real Life Options representatives were out in full force for a recent carnival-themed It's a Knockout challenge held at Joseph Rowntree School in York, in collaboration with partner organisation The Wilf Ward Family Trust who are this year celebrating their 30th birthday since the company began.

RLO Poolies were awarded third place and *Team David* achieved a well-deserved second place. Paul McCay, Chief Executive of The Wilf Ward Family Trust, was on hand to do the trophy presentations after all the teams ended the tournament doing a huge conga around the arena!

When they weren't busy taking part in the games, everyone took advantage of the tasty refreshments on offer, tried their hand at Hoopla and Hook a Duck and the sun even came out – just in time for ice creams!

The people we support who took part on the day were keen to express how much they enjoyed themselves, with David from Oxford saying, "It was awesome," Neil from Hartlepool commenting, "It was great fun," and Faith from Hartlepool adding, "I really enjoyed it, it was fun."

People we support and staff alike enjoyed competing in the hilarious team games, which included a giant inflatable assault course, donning crazy costumes and getting covered in foam! Fun, fun, fun was the order of the day as the plucky teams battled it out in the tournament, with the Real Life Options teams performing exceptionally well.

"I really enjoyed it, it was fun."



(L-R) Team David: David L, Nick, Nicola, Simon, David G., Laura, Emma, John, Mario and Tori



First time Leroy has had hair in years!



David and Mario show how it's done



Neil and Leroy get into the spirit



Kirsty gets a soaking



Emma jumps over a giant hotdog!



(L-R) RLO Poolies: Neil, Steven Wendy, Rachel, Janet, Leroy, Kirsty, Faith and Shirley who were also joined by Andrew



Neil slides down the clock tower



David springs into action



Mario slides into the foam pool



Faith, Wendy and Janet get ready to compete



Tori and David get to grips with a water game



Shirley completes the final obstacle



Step Into Action

Danny and Aileen complete 10k sponsored walk

Danny, a person we support from Leeds, recently stepped into action and completed a great sponsored walk with his People In Action group. The walk was approximately 10k (over 6 miles) so was no easy feat to complete, but Danny certainly proved up for the challenge. Accompanied by Support Worker Aileen Perkins, Danny was raring to go and was very keen on the day – as is evident by his huge smile in the photo where he and Aileen are proudly showing off their certificates.



Danny and Aileen show off their sponsored walk certificates

“It’s a great achievement for both of them,” shared Stephen Thackray, Team Coordinator. “I believe it’s the furthest Aileen has walked in the time that I’ve known her and it’s probably the furthest Dan has walked too.”

The sponsored walk was organised by the People in Action group which exists to promote social inclusion for adults and children in Leeds and co-ordinates a wide range of diverse activities that people can get involved with to meet others, feel empowered and have fun.

Tea for Two

Denise enjoys a traditional English Afternoon Tea

What better way to celebrate a visit to grand old York than to top it off with a spot of traditional English Afternoon Tea? Denise, a person we support from Leeds, recently enjoyed an incredible afternoon tea experience at the Countess of York, which is a beautifully restored railway carriage situated in the gardens of the National Railway Museum in York.



Meg and Denise



Denise enjoys afternoon tea



Marvelling at the size

“Denise was thrilled by the afternoon tea.”

Accompanied by Support Worker Meg Huntley, Denise took great joy in dining on a delicious selection of dainty sandwiches, tasty teas and scrumptious homemade cakes. The opulent carriage décor and elegant furniture helped to make it a really memorable day and the silver service made it extra special.

“Denise was thrilled by the afternoon tea experience,” said Jackie Kirton, Service Manager. “It was great to see how happy she looked in the beautiful photos from the day. Denise is doing really fantastic at the moment, staff recently also succeeded in getting her bloods taken which is a great success.”



Roll Up, Roll Up, the Scottish Advisory Board hosts a fun discovery day

New recruits enjoy learning all about the Scottish Advisory Board

The Scottish Advisory Board (SAB) recently held an exciting open day in Glasgow to recruit new members to join the Board. The day involved a number of interactive activities and lots of discussion regarding the important work the SAB does in considering, advising and discussing the development of Real Life Options in Scotland.

“I’d definitely recommend the experience of being on the Board. It’s really increased my confidence and I’ve made lots of friends.”



David supervises



Engaging in activities

Dawn, a person we support from Glenrothes, has been involved in the Scottish Advisory Board since it began three years ago. She was keen to encourage the new recruits, saying, “I’d definitely recommend the experience of being on the Board. It’s really increased my confidence and I’ve made a lot of good friends too.”

development and it gives the people we support the opportunity to have that input, which is really important. I think it’s working really well having that link.”

Chair David Wilkin, who co-chairs the Scottish Advisory Board, added, “We see the Board as an important part of the organisation’s future

The discovery day attracted a number of enthusiastic people including Christopher from Forfar, Mark from Glasgow, Janice from Milton and Derek from Glenrothes and was also attended by Chair David Wilkin, Area Manager Sandra Ferris, Head of Business Development and

Communications Anthea Sully, Marketing and Communications Manager Sam Goodwin and Support Workers Jackie Patterson, Sharon Ferguson, Iain Knight, Scott McGuinness and Fiona Campbell.

The Scottish Advisory Board in Glasgow



Spotlight on Horse Riding

Philip is Riding High

Philip shows off his super horse riding skills to Chair David Wilkin

Philip, a person we support from Durham, jumped at the chance to show off his horse riding skills when he recently met Real Life Options Chair David Wilkin. The pair met at Escomb Horse Riding Centre, where Philip has attended for over two years now, and were accompanied by his Support Worker Paul Phillips and Outreach Worker Jade Ellis, from Gaps Day Centre. In addition to becoming very proficient in learning how to control his horse, Philip has also built up a great relationship with his riding instructor Claire.

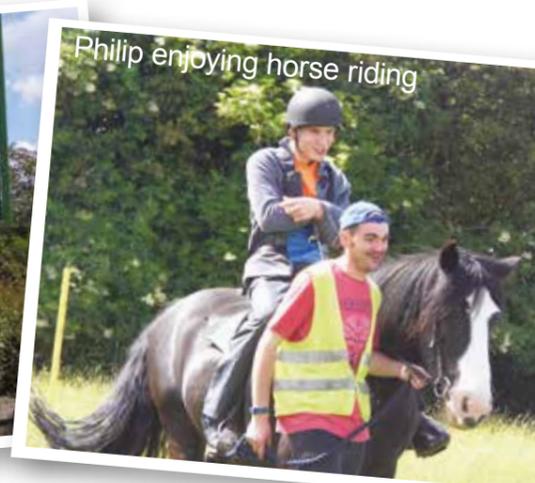
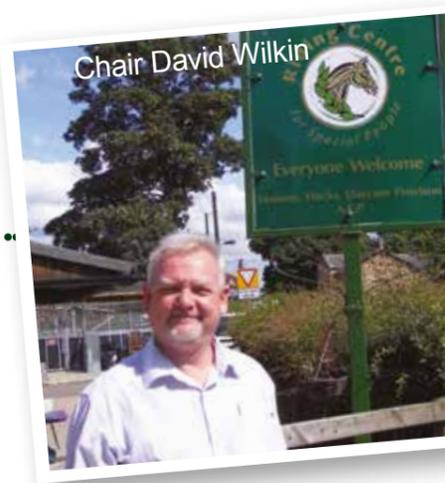
"Philip took to it straight away. He was really great, with perfect posture and his balance was impeccable from the start."

"It's great to see how far he's come since he first started," shared Claire. "At the beginning of his lessons he insisted on his Support Worker walking around next to him whilst he was on his horse, but now he is much more independent

and is quite happy to get on with things himself and he interacts a lot more with the staff."

"The first time I saw him ride I couldn't believe it," said Paul. "He took to it straight away. He was really great, with perfect posture and his balance was impeccable from the start. We'd been trying out a few different activities with him and he really enjoyed horse riding so we worked it into his regular schedule."

"I always ride Sally," said Philip, explaining about his fortnightly horse riding sessions. "I don't like wearing the helmet though!" The horse riding sessions incorporate a number of games involving balls, hoops and props as well as navigating obstacles and speeding up into a brisk canter. The centre also accommodates wheelchair users by providing carriage driving, so is very inclusive for people with physical disabilities too. Plus the centre provides volunteering opportunities for people with learning disabilities as well.



"We have a lot of clients who really enjoy it here," said Claire. "Philip's housemate Joanne is another one of our favourite riders. Even though she can sometimes be quite agitated the moment she gets on a horse she is transformed. It's like she becomes a whole new person, it's really amazing to see."

Chair David Wilkin was thrilled to finally meet Philip after corresponding with him through letters ever since the Board Buddies scheme was set up; which provides people we support access to write to members of the Board and develop a 'pen pal' relationship with them. "We've actually been in touch for over two years," explained David. "It's been really good to share his progress and find out what he's been getting up to. It's great to meet him in person today and he has certainly proved himself to be a fantastic horseman. I'm very impressed – he really was excellent."

Horse riding has clearly been extremely beneficial to Philip who has massively increased in confidence since starting lessons. When Real Life Options first started working with Philip he was reluctant to leave his flat due to his fears of crowds, however with the right type of support Philip now enjoys a great social life and has even been shopping at the Metro Centre and has had fun swimming and travelling on trains and buses.

"He's a very clever man and he has a wicked sense of humour," said Jade. "It's good to get him out of the house and structured activities like horse riding help to give him a sense of routine. He gets a lot out of the sessions – he's much better than I would be!"



Look on next page for details on how you can join our BOARD BUDDY PEN PAL SCHEME...

Benefits of Therapeutic Horse Riding



Therapeutic horse riding is gaining in popularity across the UK, with the Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA) organising activities for over 28,000 people every year.

Equine-assisted therapy (EAT) encompasses a range of activities with horses to help promote physical and emotional growth in people with a range of disabilities. Therapeutic horse riding is considered recreational therapy and provides a whole host of benefits, including:

- ✓ Increased **confidence and co-ordination**
- ✓ **Relaxation and patience**
- ✓ Improved **balance and posture**
- ✓ Greater **flexibility, strength and muscle tone**
- ✓ Improved **self-esteem and well-being**
- ✓ Improved **sensory and motor skills**
- ✓ Improved **social and communication skills**

If you're interested in giving horse riding a go, you can find local centres at www.rda.org.uk

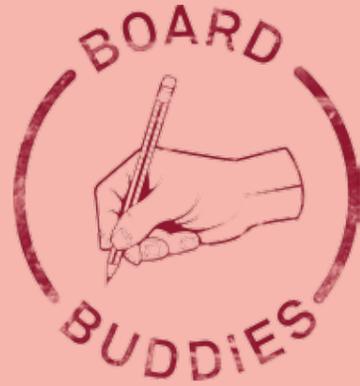
Fancy a Board Buddy Pen Pal?

The Board Buddies scheme links people we support to the Non-Executive members of the Real Life Options Board so they can write letters to each other. They are the people who oversee the Executive Directors and make sure everyone is doing what they promise they will do – ensuring that we provide the best support!

If you would like to be a Board Buddy, we are always on the look-out for more people who want to be pen pals. It's really easy to get involved – just follow these three simple steps:

1. Tell Sam Goodwin

Tell Sam Goodwin, Marketing and Communications Manager, that you want to be a Board Buddy. You can email Sam on samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org, phone on **01977 781385** or write to **Sam Goodwin, Real Life Options, David Wandless House, A1 Business Park, Knottingley, WF11 0BU.**



2. Send your one page profile

Send your one page profile to Sam Goodwin so that you can be matched to a Board Member who shares some of your interests.

3. Be patient

It might take a bit of time to match you to a Board Member but once this is done they will get in touch and you can start writing letters to each other! Have fun!

FULL THROTTLE AHEAD

Kevin kickstarts his new motorcycle ambition

Full throttle ahead! Kevin, a person we support from Cleveland, was delighted to pass his compulsory basic motorcycle training test with flying colours recently. "It's really important to pass this off-road test otherwise you're not allowed to get insured or to ride on the road," explained Kevin. "I passed straight away, the instructor was really impressed with my skill."



Kevin and his new Honda CB125F motorcycle

"The bike does all the hard work for me so I can just sit back and enjoy the ride."

After researching different options to buy his own bike, Kevin eventually settled for buying a new swanky red Honda CB125F motorcycle. "My favourite thing about motorcycling is that it gives you a choice of freedom," continued Kevin. "I'm able to just sit down, start throttling and the

bike does all the hard work for me so I can just sit back and enjoy the ride. I'm working towards passing my on-road test soon and hope to buy an even bigger bike in the future."

"The whole team are really proud of Kevin," said Richard Linton, Service Manager. "Passing his test was a fantastic achievement and he's quite rightly chuffed to bits with his new bike too."

Every Vote Counts

Interactive EU referendum sessions help to empower the people we support to have their say

June was an important month for politics with the European Union (EU) referendum. Every British citizen has a right to vote and it was important that the people we support at Real Life Options felt empowered to have their say.

The ballot paper for the EU referendum was particularly challenging for people with learning disabilities as there were only words, whereas in elections when there are party candidates the party logo is added too. At Real Life Options we ran several sessions for people we support and their Support Workers about the EU referendum. We really liked sharing the video made by the Brandon Trust, expertly presented by Beth who has learning disabilities herself, which helped to explain all about the different options available. We also looked at Easy Read resources from United Response, Mencap and the Learning Disability Alliance Scotland.

Led by Anthea Sully, Head of Business Development and Communications, the informative sessions explained about how to deal with the main points and the practicalities of voting and provided the opportunity for people to ask questions. An important point that was discovered was that people needed to understand about remain or leave, which were the key words on the ballot paper, not yes or no, stay or go, or in and out! Everyone also had the opportunity to practice voting in a mock EU referendum so they could



Angela votes in the mock EU referendum



Learning more about the EU referendum



Voting at the Polling Station

better understand the steps involved when they visited their local polling station. "It's definitely helped me, it's been very interesting," said Angela, a person we support from Stockton on Tees.

"It's really important that everyone feels comfortable voting," explained Anthea. "It's our people's right and so it's great to help people find out about how everything works and it was useful to help our Support Workers find out what to expect when supporting people at polling stations."

Sizzling Summer BBQ

The Real Life Options Ormesby Road service in Middlesbrough hosted their annual barbeque over Summer and raised £210 in the process for Real Life Options. A great time was had by all on the day, which was attended by over 80 people including staff, people we support, friends and families. They were even lucky enough for the sun to come out - a rare occasion for a British

barbeque! The money raised will go towards buying new equipment for social activities at the service, including new games and possibly even a digital radio!



Tip Top Training



Discover the exciting new changes in learning and development

There are numerous benefits of effective training and development; from increased job satisfaction, motivation and morale to reduced staff turnover and increased capacity to adopt new methods and increased efficiencies.

That's why Real Life Options have been investing wisely in this important area, employing two new Learning and Development Officers and a Learning and Development Administrator to support the existing team already in place.

"As a department we are working much more proactively and new members of the team will certainly help that," explains Jill Hicks, Learning and Development Manager. "We will primarily be focusing on further improving mandatory training, including first aid, moving and handling, safeguarding and adult support and protection, in addition to developing more e-learning courses."

"It's really important that the Learning and Development team can support Service Managers and operational teams to deliver the best support possible."

A great advantage of working for Real Life Options is that you benefit from a fully funded National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) or Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) – all our support staff are trained to a minimum of level 2 as part of their Personal Training Plan. More senior staff, including Service Managers, go on to do more specialist training on top of that too. Plus everyone in the whole organisation, including office-based staff, attend a sector-leading induction when they join.

"It's really important that the Learning and Development team can support Service Managers and operational teams to deliver the best support possible," continued Jill. "With a larger team we plan to be more responsive regarding providing quicker inductions and hopefully will be providing a wider range of training in-house too."



(L-R): The Learning and Development Team: Nan, Jill, John, Kelly, Nichola, Sarah and Andrea

Real News interviewed the Learning and Development team to find out their views on working for Real Life Options.

Here's what they had to say...

What does your job at Real Life Options involve?

John: I can speak for all the Learning and Development Officers when I say our job encompasses the full spectrum of training and development. Me and Nichola deliver training in England and Wales and Nan and Kelly are our counterparts in Scotland.

Sarah: As the Learning and Development Administrator, I organise all the training, book rooms, organise logistics, coordinate certificates – basically helping to keep all the others in control!

What's the best thing about working for Real Life Options?

Nichola: The company and what it stands for and the work that they do. It's all about the people we support – that's what I like most of all.

John: I'm absolutely overwhelmed by the way people are supported by Real Life Options. It's like a tight-knit family community; everyone supports each other and really live the company values. People really love what they do and what they stand for – that's what's kept me here for over 10 years.

What do you hope to achieve?

Nan: If you train staff to work well with the people we support, it creates a well trained, qualified staff team – which means people get the quality of life they are entitled to – that's ultimately what it's all about.

Nichola: As a team we want to continue to evolve and become a stronger, well recognised team. We are all out to do our best and ensure our people get the best level of support possible and that everyone upholds our core company values. We want there to be a seamless link between the organisation and the training team.

Kelly: In a nutshell, I aim to allow Support Workers to develop their skills and increase their knowledge base, empowering them in their day-to-day jobs.

John: To make a difference and have a job I really enjoy. We all make a really good team, even though we are dispersed across the UK we really are like a family – we're a great group and we work really well together. We'd also love more opportunities to involve the people we support in training and inductions when possible. We can talk about it – but it's their life, they've got the t-shirt! It's great to hear directly from people about how they can best be helped and supported to live their lives the way they want to.

We look forward to seeing you in the Training Room in the near future!

Forget Me Not

Reliving memories to raise awareness of Dementia

Real Life Options recently held a special charity day in aid of  Dementia Friends, a campaign ran by Alzheimer's Society, which is the UK's biggest ever initiative to change people's perceptions of Dementia. Azra Kirkby, Interim Chief Executive said, "Dementia is something that touches the lives of many people, not only the people that Real Life Options support but also friends and family of our staff. It's really important as an organisation that we raise awareness and we are hoping many of our staff will sign up to become Dementia Friends."

As well as watching an awareness video and taking part in a quiz, staff relived their memories and came to work wearing something that symbolised a special memory, ranging from Commonwealth Game Volunteer outfits and graduation caps to dance costumes! Frank Minshull won with his special Sowerby Rushden Cart Pulling outfit.



Head Office staff raise awareness of Dementia

CHARITY EVENT CALENDAR

Check out our charity calendar to see what upcoming events are planned for the coming months. We'd love you to get involved!

FRIDAY 7TH OCT - Macmillan
The Great Real Life Options Bake Off

FRIDAY 18TH NOV - Children in Need
Dress Down Day, Sweepstake and Quiz

FRIDAY 16TH DEC - Save The Children
Christmas Jumper Day and Quiz

Taking the Leap

Charity skydive raises over £350 for Real Life Options

Anthony Kay, IT Systems Support at ITPS, and his friend Michael Jeans recently took the plunge and bravely did a sponsored skydive to raise over £350 for Real Life Options. The pair jumped from the dizzying height of 15,000 feet – pretty impressive, especially as Anthony isn't too keen on heights!

Reflecting on the jump, Anthony said, "It was an amazing day, definitely worth the wait. I've been working for ITPS for around two months now and as part of a Managed Service Contract, I work closely with Real Life Options and see the great work that the charity gets involved with. This is especially important to Michael since his brother Stephen has severe Autism so it's great to fundraise for a charity that supports people like Stephen. We thought it was a great opportunity to do something for a good cause and focus on others!"

Congratulations to both guys – a fantastic effort!



Anthony takes the plunge



Michael leaps into action

New IT System Improves Efficiency

A recent IT transition from the Advanced 365 Citrix system to the new RDS system is now complete. The new system and support arrangements will provide a number of benefits which will streamline efficiency and provide improved support including:

- ✓ **Out of hours emergency** IT response
- ✓ Improved onsite support to **fix faults quicker**
- ✓ **Reduced IT costs**
- ✓ A **more personal** service

(L-R): The IT Team: Paul Cusworth, Dave Nesbitt, Anthony Kay and Mark Cassy



Who ya gonna call?

For any IT faults please remember to **contact ITPS** (our IT support provider) in the first instance - our ITPS contact is **Anthony Kay**.

0845 241 1668

itps.support@it-ps.com



Seizing the chance to do something EXTRAORDINARY

David Wandless Training Bursary

When David Wandless founded Real Life Options in 1992 his ambition was to see people with learning disabilities better supported and more encouraged to take control of their lives. The David Wandless Training Bursary is a natural extension of those values - it was established to support the creative, quirky and inspiring ideas of our staff to help fund the development of skills and knowledge that would ultimately benefit the lives of the people we support.

In the past the bursary has helped to fund everything from forest school skills and healthy eating to training on the safe use of social media. Plus for the second year running the Real Life Options Board decided to open up applications for the training bursary to ARC member organisations.

The judging panel was made up of Lisa Lenton, ARC Managing Director, Rob Hendry, Non-Executive Director at Real Life Options and Anthea Sully, Head of Business Development and Communications at Real Life Options.



Lisa Lenton and Anthea Sully present one of the winners with their bursary cheques

All the applications, both from ARC members and Real Life Options, were anonymised and judged purely on their own merit. "The calibre of the applications was really high," said Anthea. "It made the judging a challenge to determine who deserved to be the winners, but it was great to see the diverse range of ideas that were put forward."

And the winners are... ARC Winning Entries:

Real Life Options Winning Entries:

- ✓ **Service User Skill Swap** – providing service users with the opportunity to use their skills (such as baking, gardening or art) and share this between other people from other services.
- ✓ **Job Carving** – to increase the number of supported individuals in paid employment by meeting the specific and often unique needs of each job seeker (for example a service user who loves to Hoover finding employment at a race course hoovering carpets).

- ✓ **Halas – Black Country Speaking Poetry and Prose** – person-specific poetry, prose and song sessions in local dialect based on people's stories to develop storytelling techniques and help them to express feelings and emotions.
- ✓ **PAN Parent Support Groups** – to help fund a 'Working with Parents' qualification to help empower group leaders in a parent support group who all have disabled children.
- ✓ **Positive Support in Teesside** – to help support the delivery of a robust Individual Service Fund model to the people supported.

Real News meets George Lang, Managing Director of 1st Homecare

In a nutshell what does your role as Managing Director of 1st Homecare involve?

I have overall responsibility for all of 1st Homecare, which includes the delivery and business development of all branches as well as financial involvement too. This predominantly means supporting the managers to continue their good work and develop their services and assisting them in whatever that requires; whether that's growing the service or liaising and connecting with the local authorities at times and supporting the managers throughout.

What job did you have before?

I've worked in social care for over 20 years so have a lot of experience in this area. Most recently, before coming to 1st Homecare, I was Head of Services at Elite Care, which is now part of Prestige Nursing and Care. It was very similar as it was all about the care of and housing support for older people.

What are your hobbies/interests?

Celtic Football Club! That's definitely one of my primary interests – I'm a season ticket holder. I've also got a wee grandchild who I absolutely adore.

What's your favourite film, music artist/group and book?

Favourite film would definitely be *The Bridges of Madison County*, it's a great film. For books I'm a fan of the espionage/thriller genre, in particular those written by *Frederick Forsyth* and *Gerald Seymour*. I've got an eclectic taste in music – I enjoy everything from *Elvis Presley* to *Meatloaf*. I'm a big fan of *David Bowie* – at one stage I had every record he'd ever done, even imports and music he'd done in his original name – David Jones (before he had to change it because of the Monkees).

What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

Talk to a lawyer first!



GEORGE LANG
Managing Director of 1st Homecare

What do people like and admire about you?

People say I'm honest and straight to the point. I'm supportive and I've got a good, maybe slightly strange, sense of humour!

What's important to you?

Celtic Football Club! My children and granddaughter. In a work context it's about giving managers ownership of the branches they look after and giving them responsibility, whilst supporting them at the same time. It's important to support people in their home, my passion is about older people's services and how we support them. All staff members, regardless of their level, should feel empowered to take responsibility for what they do. I follow the Richard Branson philosophy: "Train people well enough so they can leave, treat them well enough so they don't want to."

How best can you be supported?

Be open and honest. I like to avoid internal politics and it's important for me that there is no blame culture.

Accessible Information for Everyone

Complying with the new Accessible Information Standard

You may have heard discussion recently about the Accessible Information Standard - which is a new mandatory standard in England that all organisations must follow from 31st July 2016. Real Life Options complies with this standard and ensures that people have access to information they can understand and access to any communication support they may need.

Service Managers will be able to tell you more about this if you are interested, but in the meantime the five important steps of the Accessible Information Standard are outlined below so you can understand more about what it is all about - and why it is a good thing!

The 5 important steps of the Accessible Information Standard:



1. Identify

Ask people if they have any information or communication needs, and find out how to meet their needs.



2. Record

Record those needs in a clear, standardised way that is highly visible.



3. Flag

Use alerts or flags to make it clear on the person's file what their needs are and clearly explain how those needs should be met.



4. Share

Share information about the person's needs with other NHS and adult social care providers.



5. Act

Make sure people get information in an accessible way and receive the communication support they need.

Andrew Graduates College

Andrew, a person we support from Fraserburgh, tells Real News about his college graduation experience in his own words...

My name is Andrew, I am 22 years old and I went to college in Aberdeen. I learned about some jobs including porter, audio visual and IT assistant. This was through Project SEARCH. I learned lots of different skills and I was proud to graduate. I am now looking for a job and have been looking weekly.

Debbie O'Neill, Service Manager added, "Andrew has lived at Ark Court in Fraserburgh since January 2014. Andrew had a long journey every day by bus to attend the college in Aberdeen, leaving before 7am every day and not getting home till 6pm.

Debbie continued, "Andrew showed real commitment to complete the course. Andrew is now being supported to find employment. Two of Andrews support staff Faye Martin and Gayna Moore attended the graduation ceremony with Andrew, along with his brother Stephen."



Andrew receives his graduation scroll



Guest Writer: Andrew
A person we support from Fraserburgh

Jayne is Learner of the Month

Congratulations to Jayne, Karina and Hannah for their outstanding achievements

Huge congratulations to Jayne, a person we support from Wales, who was named 'Learner of the Month' on her Educ8 training due to her improved computer skills and completing the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) Level 5 qualification. Jayne may be an older student but she certainly proved that she can keep up with her younger classmates and has excelled greatly throughout the duration of her course.

Congratulations also to Karina Thomas who completed her QCF Level 5 and to Hannah Hawkins who completed her QCF Level 2.

"I'm incredibly proud of Jayne and the other girls," said Gail Sherrard, Service Manager. "Gaining their qualifications is a great achievement and they've all put a great deal of work in, so it's great to see that rewarded."



Have

YOUR

Say...

COMING
SOON...

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



Real Life Options
Service User Survey

 Name:

 Age:

 Date:

 EasyRead version

Calling All Service Users

Don't forget - soon you will have the opportunity to have YOUR say in the **new and improved Service User Survey** during your next Person-Centred Review.

More details about the survey will be coming soon...

a real choice | a real voice | a real difference

THE BIG INTERVIEW

Real News talks to Gary Bourlet, Co-Founder of Learning Disability England (LDE)

What is your job title and where do you work?

I'm the Co-Founder for Learning Disability England (LDE), based in Kent.

What are your hobbies/interests?

I enjoy walking (country and coastal), sightseeing and travelling. I also enjoy sport, especially watching football and athletics events on TV as well as going out to the cinema and theatre.

If you had to take one book and one piece of music to a desert island what would you take?

ELO Mr Blue Sky and my life story, which I've yet to get started on!

What have you tried?

I've set up a number of People First initiatives across England and Europe, as well as the Norfolk Coalition of Disabled People and of course LDE. I've also been on panels for the United Nations and the EU. I've been a BBC Presenter for *Life of Our Own* and an ITV reporter for the *Link* programme, in addition to being interviewed for local radio, the news and *The Guardian*.

What have you learnt?

I have learnt it's very hard work setting up new groups and it takes a long time for everyone to gel together. I've also learnt to share my experience to help others, saying that I started with no confidence which grew over the years which built my self-esteem and developed by turning my aggression into assertiveness. Self-confidence grew out of that, plus self-determination to make things happen - all of which did not grow over night.

What are you pleased about?

I love what I do and how I have developed over the years, my CV is very long and I've worked at loads of organisations - both user led or provider led. I am pleased that I've got to know lots of new people as now my network has



Gary Bourlet, Co-Founder of Learning Disability England (LDE)

become mega in the last 33 years. I'm really proud of getting LDE off the ground and working together with people with learning disabilities, families and service providers as this will make us stronger.

What are you concerned about?

The things I have not achieved yet and seeing the problems we've had in the last 33 years not improving, but potentially worsening since the Brexit referendum. People with learning disabilities are still not always getting their human and civil rights. Self Advocacy remains a problem too, as does Hate and Mate Crime and people's benefits being cut.

What will your next steps be?

Making LDE a success and building a capacity so we can do and achieve more, doing big conferences, campaigning, taking action and doing marches, such as Disability Pride Events. I'd like to see more television, not by me - but by the other members of LDE. Finding funding for Self Advocacy groups and getting people with learning disabilities elected as MPs and into the House of Lords would be great as we want to change laws. It would also be good to see more people with learning disabilities being represented on TV and in films. I'd like to do a Magna Carta for people with learning disabilities and their families and work with other disability organisations, not just learning disability ones. Plus I'd like us to have our own radio station too!

Talking to the WI... It's a Piece of Cake!



Real Life Options staff recently hit the road to deliver a series of engaging talks to Womens Institute (WI) groups across England. Aimed to raise awareness of Real Life Options and help to break down common misconceptions about people with learning disabilities, the talks sparked a lot of interest from the lively groups of ladies.

At the latest WI talk in Yarm, Rachel, a person we support from Hartlepool was very enthusiastic about getting the opportunity to present. She was joined by Anthea Sully, Head of Business Development and Communications and Wendy Lee, Service Manager.

"Rachel jumped at the chance to talk about how she likes to be supported," said Anthea. "She was absolutely brilliant - a natural presenter and everyone really loved her."

There were lots of interactive activities to get stuck into, including a quiz and the opportunity for all the WI ladies to create their very own one page profile.

Plus the presenters also got the privilege of judging the 'best tea towel' and 'best flower arrangement in a wine glass' competitions and got to enjoy some delicious homemade cake - well, it was the WI after all!



Judging the best tea-towel



Wendy Lee and Rachel

We Need You!

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

Here at Real News 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.**

If you're a person we support who would like to get involved we'd love to hear from you. Whether it's sharing your artwork, photographs and recipes or writing poetry, film reviews, gardening tips or even writing your own article, nothing is too small! We'd love to see more contributions from people we support across the UK to find out what you have been up to in your city - **all ideas are welcome.**

Whether it's a painting you're particularly proud of, your best chocolate cake recipe or a film review, please do get in touch!

So if this is you, or you know someone else who would be interested, **please contact the editor Sam Goodwin on 01977 781385 or email samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org**



NICE TO MEET YOU

Getting to know some of the brilliant people we support across the UK...

Jacqueline from Dunfermline

What people like and admire about me:

- My smile when I am happy
- People like my sense of humour
- People admire my fancy hats I enjoy wearing
- People admire how smart I like to dress and look



What's important to me:

- Regular contact with my mum – meeting her for coffee or visiting her
- Consistency
- Knowing what is happening at all times
- Knowing what staff are coming on shift
- Being offered choice
- Having time to myself within my room
- Getting my hair done
- Being up to date with fashion (clothes)

How best to support me:

- Speak to me using clear, short sentences
- Use my pictorial planner board - this lets me know what's happening next
- Always give me eye contact when speaking to me
- Offer me choices
- Be consistent with me at all times

Tristen from Dunfermline

What people like and admire about me:

- How keen I am to achieve my goals and do my best in life
- How independent I can be
- My bubbly and outgoing personality
- How loving and caring I can be



What's important to me:

- My family and staff team
- My activities I do with West Fife
- Going to watch the football with my dad
- Having contact with my Advocate 'David'
- Having chillout time to play my X-Box
- Consistency
- Being offered choice

How best to support me:

- Offer me choices throughout
- Include me in all decision making
- Be consistent and patient with me
- Allow me to do as much as I can myself then support
- Speak to me clearly and always be upbeat with me
- Support me to do the activities I enjoy
- Allow me time to chill on my own

Would you like to be featured in a future issue? Or do you know someone who would? Please get in touch with Sam Goodwin on samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org

Real Life Entertainment

Hope you enjoy our entertainment section. Answers can be found on the back page.

Wordsearch

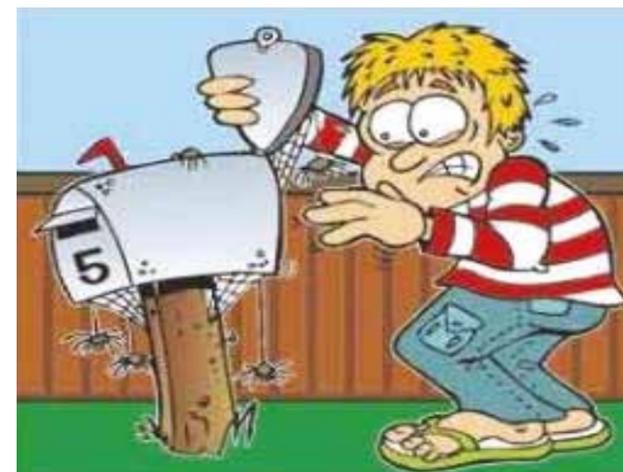
See how many words you can find in our Autumn wordsearch. Words may be horizontal, vertical or diagonal.

- ACORN
- APPLE
- AUTUMN
- CONKER
- HARVEST
- LEAVES
- ORCHARD
- ORANGE
- RIPE
- SCARECROW
- SEASON
- SQUIRREL
- SUNFLOWER
- YELLOW

A	N	Y	E	A	T	H	T	S	E	A	S	O	N	I
S	O	F	W	L	E	A	V	E	S	A	R	S	M	C
O	R	L	B	J	Y	R	F	H	S	P	C	P	P	H
C	A	I	O	R	C	H	A	R	D	G	I	O	C	S
O	N	P	E	S	M	A	T	F	B	E	A	S	R	U
K	G	I	P	A	S	D	L	H	T	O	U	O	Y	N
D	E	R	U	L	F	R	T	A	U	J	T	W	Z	F
A	J	C	Y	Y	E	T	I	R	F	Q	U	A	K	L
M	C	O	N	K	E	R	R	V	S	D	M	T	E	O
N	A	U	S	A	C	T	L	E	Y	R	N	J	S	W
G	Y	M	R	N	H	M	Y	S	T	E	R	K	B	E
S	Q	U	I	R	R	E	L	T	R	A	L	X	L	R
D	R	L	P	V	K	F	T	R	J	S	C	L	L	F
I	A	S	E	T	C	S	U	B	T	P	L	P	O	N
P	U	S	C	A	R	E	C	R	O	W	U	S	K	W

Spot the Difference

Can you spot the seven differences between the two pictures below?



Competition Time!

Share your favourite showstopping recipe to win

Share your favourite recipe for your best cake, buns or biscuits, along with a photograph of your creation to be in with a chance of winning £50 and having your recipe printed!

Send your recipe and photo into the editor Sam Goodwin (details below) by **18th November 2016** to be in with a chance of winning £50. Please include your full name and contact details so we can let you know if you win.

Competition is open to all readers. The winner will be notified by **9th December 2016** and will receive a £50 cash prize. The editor's decision is final.

Congratulations to Beverley Hepper from Head Office who won the Summer picture competition.

Win £50!



Share your recipe!

Bev's Ibiza sunset

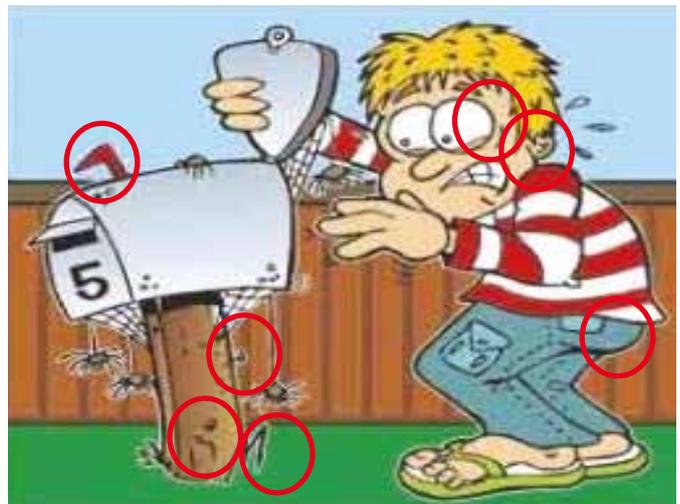
Got News? Get in touch!

To be a part of the next issue or to share your thoughts simply contact the editor Sam Goodwin:

 samantha.goodwin@reallifeoptions.org

 01977 781385

Real Life Entertainment Answers



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