

Ian's story

Social Care Personal Budgets

Ian lives in Kent. He employs Maureen as a personal assistant using his personal budget.

In April 2007 I married Denise. It was a fantastic weekend, the weather was beautiful, a big family wedding, a big celebration; the start of our future together. While we were organising the wedding, I felt fairly rough and pretty run down, but put that down to everything that was going on. A week after that I was in hospital and wouldn't be walking again.

I remember being taken straight into A&E and I remember a doctor giving me a shot of morphine, putting a catheter in and that's it. The next thing I vaguely remember is that on May 6th there was a string of cards above my bed and I had been in a coma. The illness had left me wheelchair bound, quadriplegic, unable to feed or even hold my head up in the early days. It took nearly six months just to be able to sit in a chair. The worst part was the unknown prognosis in terms of how much of a recovery I could make.

In mid November I was discharged and about a week later my case manager visited me. He realised very quickly that we had major problems. The biggest problem was for my wife - how was she going to cope with someone in my condition?

The social care team looked at the whole family and the whole support package we required. That was when we started talking about Self Directed Support and it became apparent early on that the 'Kent Card' was the

way to go. The Kent Card is a Visa card from Kent County Council. The flexibility of the Kent Card makes it easier for me to pay for services in a secure manner and I use it to spend my Direct Payment.

I use my Personal Budget to pay for the services of a self employed personal assistant. I call her in as and when I need her and I pay for her time and any expenses direct, using the Kent card. I also use one of the local care agencies. They have people that come in on a regular schedule to get me up and to help me if I need them during the day. It's having access to very simple things that can make a huge amount of difference to the way you live your life.

The beauty of personalisation is that you've got a family life back, so you are getting back to some kind of normal routine, or as normal as you can make it.

Ian's TOP TIP

"Don't be afraid to be different. We don't all fit into the same boxes. I am not a 'Service User' I'm an individual. The 'Professionals' have to stop ticking boxes and get to know the person and find new ways to give us opportunities. With the right support and effort you can get your life back."