



Daniel's story

My name is Daniel and I have a medical diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia. I was in receipt of the integrated personal budget last year and it has done wonders for me. It has definitely improved my life.

I left a psychiatric hospital three years ago and when I had left I was weighing almost 15 stones, which is about 95 kilograms. This was because the medication I was being prescribed made my appetite increase and was very sedating. The medication also made me put on lots of weight.

The personal budget I started was flexible enough to meet my individual needs and paid for me to enrol into and go to a gym. This was something I could not really afford to do and probably would not have been motivated enough to pay for myself. With the exercise I did at the gym, which also had swimming facilities, I was able to get some exercise in a nice environment.

I now weigh only 11 stone which is about 70 kilograms and at a recent visit to my GP, the GP said I was at the ideal weight for my height. I am now much more happy with my body shape and am now much more fit. When I was so heavy at the 15 stones I was feeling very depressed with my body shape and would not like to take my top off in front of people. Nowadays when I go to the gym I feel comfortable enough to go swimming in my swimwear.

I feel physically much fitter and I also feel more motivated to do other things. Also because the personal budget introduced me to the gym, I would now consider paying for it myself out of my own budget because it was so beneficial to me and improved my lifestyle so much.

This was the best thing that the personal budget helped me with but it was also flexible enough to help me with my college work by providing a laptop computer for me to work with at home. Unfortunately though, I had to drop out of college for a few reasons but I still use the laptop at home. I have been trying to write a book on my experiences of having a mental health problem and it has become my own personal hobby. The computer also means that I can listen to music and research personal interests.

I also love to watch sports and especially love to watch football matches. The problem was, however, if I wanted to watch a football match I would have to go to the pub and in turn I would end up drinking alcohol. I have had problems in the past with drugs contributing to a deterioration of my mental health and my psychotic (psychosis) problems and schizophrenia worse.

The personal budget was flexible enough to fit my individual needs and me to have TV equipment installed at home and this in turn helped me to stay away from the pub and prevent me from drinking alcohol.

The personal budget has definitely helped me to improve my mental health and my health physically as well. It has helped me towards recovery.

Daniel