

Rochelle Dawes

My journey to find a Personal Budget was a strange one; somewhat I have to admit of my own making.

Social Services approached me about the opportunities within the system, known as 'Direct Payments' to try and alter what had become a very isolated existence for me, due to the fact that I had no one to accompany or assist me while out apart from direct family.... let alone the disposable funds. After they explained; I declined, as it was very restrictive and didn't seem to fit my way of life. However when the new Personal Budget scheme came around I was contacted again and as it was more flexible I gladly accepted.

I have had a Personal Budget for a little over fourteen months now – and it has changed my life a great deal. There have been ups and downs, I'm not going to lie; but all-in-all it has improved my lifestyle immensely. Having the budget has not only developed my life socially but also my role in society enabling me to better manage to socialise and get involved in civilisation.

There are many things that having a Personal Budget has allowed me to do; this will of course differ person to person – and depends on many contributing factors. I now employ a PA and in the last year I have been on trips to the theatre, museum, theme park and the zoo to name but a few. It can also help with keeping appointments such as doctors, hospital and so much more.

Like I said earlier there have been some hard times as it is a new system: rest easy though, there are organisations including SYCIL, which can make the transition; whatever that may be, easier for you. I know from personal experience that SYCIL open their door with a friendly face and an understanding attitude. I **WOULD** highly recommend the Personal Budget if you desire diversity, freedom and possibility in your life!!