

George's story

in Control is grateful to George for sharing this story

George is 37. In this story, we hear from a man who was the first person to receive an individualised budget from his local authority in the East of England.

George has spent his life suffering from enduring mental illness.

He grew up in the countryside with his three brothers. After leaving school and becoming self-employed, he developed a psychotic condition.

The Local Authority where George lives decided to introduce an alternative approach to providing resource allocation. George was invited by the co-ordinator to participate in the pilot.

“I was allocated the amount of money that I was going to receive and was told how much it was. So I decided to spend the money accordingly, but I was trying to see what I needed in the short term - and what I needed long term. I've recently been divorced and would now like to meet somebody else, possibly to get married again at a later date.”

One of the most helpful aspects of planning for an Individualised Budget was for George to spend some time thinking about what he would do with the allocation.

The Individualised Budget was also an incentive for George to come off benefits and become employed, leading to a better lifestyle with new opportunities, relationships and experiences. Over past years, while he was on benefits, George had started to drift. With his own budget came a chance to make life positive.

He was very clear about what he would use his allocation for. The amount was relatively small, approximately £2000 per year. However, it was effective in meeting his requirements.

“It’s tailored for individual needs. With the small amount of money that I’ve received, I’ve tried to use it as best as I can and hopefully for the money, I can do a lot with it, a lot more than perhaps you might’ve done if you were buying into normal social services.”

Once the allocation was agreed, the whole amount was paid into a bank account. This came as a surprise to George. A system had been set up for him to show receipts for what the allocation had been spent on. He opted to manage this himself even though there would have been support available.

The difference to his life since he received his allocation has been very positive. Several months later, George has achieved a great deal. He has taken a holiday and is now more active in his artistic work.

“Painting helps me relax and helps takes some time away - some time out... It’s a way of chilling out in some ways. If I’ve got problems or feeling stressed out, it’s quite nice to be able to paint, just to take some time away... it’s quite beneficial because I see the result in the end... it’s quite rewarding for me”.

Gill, the Individualised Budgets co-ordinator said:

“I think George was incredibly thoughtful in the way he went about the process. He took time to work it out (and) to think about how he would spend his money. I think he also thought very carefully about planning, not just for now but for his future as well, and how he wanted his future to be, so that all the things in his support plan were aimed at making his life work better.

In the process of coming up with their support plan, people do start thinking about how their whole life is going to work. So they start thinking about the possibilities. And I think in George's case, he was thinking in terms of actually having a holiday, having his respite...somewhere different. And during that process, he discovered that he could actually get a cheap flight to Greece, where he's got a mate. So, while he was actually writing his support plan, he went off to Greece....

I think there's something that is actually so freeing about enabling people to think differently about... their whole life, rather than just this bit that's called Social Care or Supporting People, or Access to Work. It actually all joins up and makes somebody's life work better"