

Razia's Story

Personal health budgets



Razia*, aged 32 and from Merseyside, used her personal health budget to purchase a computer, enabling her to study at home and also maintain supportive email contact with her family. A bus/train pass ensured she could attend vital appointments with mental health professionals.

I was in an abusive relationship and had to escape. So first I went to a hostel and then was moved to accommodation of my own. But I was traumatised by what had happened and needed counselling and support.

Unfortunately my accommodation was in an area where I knew no one. I felt really isolated and did not have contact with anyone.

My social worker felt I could benefit from a personal health budget, and so I had meetings with an independent

health broker. Their job is to support people to decide the best way personal health budget funds can be used to meet a person's needs.

Together, we discussed what would help me, and what would improve my mental health. We decided a laptop would be of benefit, as it would mean I could stay in touch via email with my family in Pakistan.

I also enrolled on a foundation course at a local college where I am studying "Prepare to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector" which covers the basics of teaching in adult education,

including how to plan lessons and motivate students. It is a first step towards gaining a teacher qualification. But without email access and a computer I would be unable to keep up the course work.

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I have to travel a lot but was finding it too expensive and travel time extremely lengthy

and complicated. I was referred to a mental health service specialising in helping people in my situation and offered anytime-access to the service, but because of travel costs I could not go. I also attend counselling on a weekly basis with an Urdu-speaking counsellor specialising in helping people who had suffered domestic violence, and go to hospital for physical problems related to the domestic abuse I suffered.

“Being able to stay in contact with my family, and keep up to date with my studies is so good.”

To get to college I had to travel weekly by bus – a return

journey of more than three hours – and I need to get to mosque. So, it was decided that a bus/train pass would be really important to enable me to get to all these places. The pass enables me to often take one train, instead of many – and slower – buses.

The personal health budgets for both the laptop and bus/train pass were one-off direct payments. They are of such help to me in building a new life, following the trauma and upheaval of the last 18 months.

Being able to stay in contact with my family, and keep up to date with my studies is so good. It's keeping me sane, really! And without the bus/train pass I would not be able to access the support that is helping me recover and move on.”

Martha*, Razia's consultant clinical psychologist says:

Razia was really isolated. There was racism in the area she had to move to, and no culturally-specific services or opportunities.

To access these she needed to be able to travel out of the area.

She fled from a very abusive situation. She was frightened for her life. So being able to keep in contact with her family has been extremely important for Razia.

Both the laptop and the bus/train pass, paid for by a personal health budget, have helped Razia immensely, including attending the additional mental health services she needs.

** Names have been changed*



A personal health budget allows people to have more choice, flexibility and control over the health services and care they receive.

The Department of Health thanks the people and families concerned for sharing their personal stories. For further information please contact:

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