



## AGM Speech 2011: Brian Button

Hello everyone, my name is Brian Button.

Sorry but my story is not as exciting as Toyah's. I haven't been bungy jumping, deep sea diving or pole dancing. My only claim to fame is being able to dodge the flying pots & pans thrown by my long suffering Wife over the years!! I could have competed for a gold medal at the forth coming paralympics for plate dodging if I were not now using a Personal Budget for my care.

I had a work related accident back in 1984. The outcome was me becoming a wheelchair user, or a wheeler as I like to be called. After many months spent in two spinal units I was discharged home with my mind set that I was going to rebuild the world from my wheelchair (marvellous how medication can easily confuse your mind & help gloss over the proper reality of life). June my Wife had decided that she would continue in full time employment and care for me too.

After a week of trying to do this it became clear that this was not possible. If it were to continue one of us would finish up murdering the other, neither of us had listened to the discharge team at the hospitals of how demanding life would become when living at home. One morning after heated words with each other, flying plates and other things and a suggestion of maybe I should try to get through the cat flap it was decided that maybe I should contact the outreach worker at the Sheffield Hospital to see what could be done.

A social worker visited us and after a long discussion it was decided I would have Home Care to help me with personal care etc. This was set in place and I was awarded 17 hours care per week. June felt she had abandoned me as I now had two new Ladies in my life which was looking after me, but with big boxes of Chocs and other goodies (gents in the audience will understand that bribery is the best course of action at times like this!) I managed to convince her that even though the two Ladies were doing lots of personal things for me, life could carry on even with outside intrusion from the two carers. I continued to have Home care given by the same two ladies for 10+ years until the company June worked offered her a senior position in Sheffield, which of course meant leaving Lincolnshire & moving nearer to Sheffield which we did.

Home Care, with a reduced package delivered by DMBC was set up for me, which lasted for 15 years, care was delivered by many different carers and at varying times of the day, towards the end of the 15 years care provision was becoming troublesome where one day I was getting up at 10:00, the next 11:45 and many times in between on other days, with only two showers per week. Another accident where I broke my back for a second time resulting in the need for more care hours which was granted but only delivered for a short period of time before being reduced back to the original package. My health started to deteriorate, skin problems, pressure sores started & with the onset of having to inject insulin to control my Diabetes, which meant food was required at regular periods during the day plus June started getting neurological problems with reduced dexterity in her hands. A relationship at breaking point, we came to the conclusion this level of care couldn't go on any more.

I had been lucky that after being in Doncaster for a few years I had the good fortune to meet up with Steven & Barbara who were then involved with a group named Direct Payments Support Group. What they told me put new ideas into my head on how my care could be provided. After attending meetings, events, for a few months & talking to other Direct Payment users I decided this was the way I wanted my care to be delivered. This at the time was all very new to me & a little frightening but a change in my care provision had to be made so I contacted DMBC adult services and informed them of my decision to have my care under the Direct Payments scheme. I thought maybe it would take 6 to 8

weeks before I would get a assessment, 3 months went by, then 6 months with nothing happening, all the time life becoming harder by the day. After lots of chasing up by many people I eventually got my assessment 1 year & 1 day after first applying. I kidded myself through this period that me being a big guy I was needed to hold up the pile of other applicants in the IN tray!!!

The social worker who came to see me was a delightful lady ad we set about filling in the necessary SAQ, (Self Assessment Questionnaire) which can be a nightmare. The first package I was offered fell quite a bit short on what I needed to live a reasonable quality of life, on a return visit & after a discussion the S/W took on board on what I was saying, went back to her office, voiced my concerns to her managers and with help from Barbara and Glyn Jones a much better offer was forthcoming. Well one that would give me a more reasonable quality of life and one much much better than what I was experiencing through home care.

August 1st 2010 was D DAY. I became a Personal Budget holder, I now employ two ladies who are my P.A's. There are very few words that can explain the difference being in charge of my own care package has made to my life. I can now get up when I want, have a shower every day (good news for shower gel manufactures, bad news for under arm deodorant suppliers) resulting in a big improvement in my skin condition, I am pressure sore free, plus social involvement which had been virtually non-existent previously, enabled me to get involved with Disability groups and organisations like this one, plus some NHS steering groups. My care package most certainly saved two people from divorce along with helping to rebuild a family life. Having the RIGHT care package for yourself is very important.

I am very proud to be a member of this group, its nice being the grand daddy!! all of us have vast experience of Disability issues by living the life we have been dealt. We all know what pit falls that are out there, we support each other and others to try to overcome them, talk through unpopular decisions which are made on our behalf. Collectively we have consulted with Katie, Lauren & Martin from DMBC with some favourable outcomes on some aspects of the Personal Budget Scheme, we have voiced our opinions, exchanged our views, suggested possible new procedures, that maybe with clearer and easier to understand documentation on applying for and managing a P/Budget may be forth coming. The combined spirit, belief and energy of this group will continue to campaign in the hope that one day such a system that works for all will be available for all persons wanting to use Personal Budget for their care provision.

If anyone attending today knows of anyone who is thinking about using P/B for their care package and they are not sure of what decision to make, myself & other members of our group are here to be contacted to listen to their fears, answer their questions which just might change their restricted life to a very positive one by using P/B like it has mine.

Thank you everyone for listening to me, I hope by attending today you may have seen the very positive way in which Personal Budgets can improve an individual's quality of life.

Oh, and at home we now manage to keep a set of plates for 6 months at a time instead of when previously they only lasted a few days.

Only down side is muscle wastage from not throwing plates at each other. Good old NHS, make a appointment to see the physio! But is that a medical need?