

As a wheelchair user with many acute medical needs my husband and I struggled for over 8 years. We both had to give up jobs we enjoyed; me because of failing health and my husband to care for me.

Back in 2007 we hit crisis point and could cope with day to day living no longer without some extra help. Very reluctantly we contacted the Care Management team (via Customer Service Centre at Hessle) and our situation was assessed in a sensitive but realistic way.

We were consulted sensitively throughout the whole process and very quickly had a Care Plan. Now that it was recognised that I needed help and my husband needed time for himself, I was entitled to Direct Payments, which is now being super ceded by A Personal Budget. This meant that instead of the LA sending in carers who I didn't know, and who more importantly were not always up to date on my medical needs, at any time of the day/night which they felt fit, I am paid a set amount of money by the LA each month and with this I employ my own care staff and can fit their hours not only around my needs but also around other aspects of my life. In fact we now HAVE A LIFE again.

Although I have only been employing my own staff for two and a half years, with help and monitoring from the LA, I recently won a Prestigious Award from Skills for Care Annual Accolades and attended a Gala Dinner at the Landmark Hotel (now referred to as 'The Oscars of the Care World').

To reach the final 3 nominees in my category for the Yorkshire & Humber region I had to go through a rigorous scrutiny about how I used, trained and developed my staff. My nomination then went forward with 29 others selected from England to a National Judging panel and at the end of October I was told that I had reached the final 3.

On 3rd December at the Awards evening I was announced as the winner of my category and presented with a trophy and a certificate by Fiona Philips. **I hope that this will encourage many more people to follow my lead. The day-to-day rewards are immeasurable in that as a disabled person you are not shunned but respected as any other person in society is.**