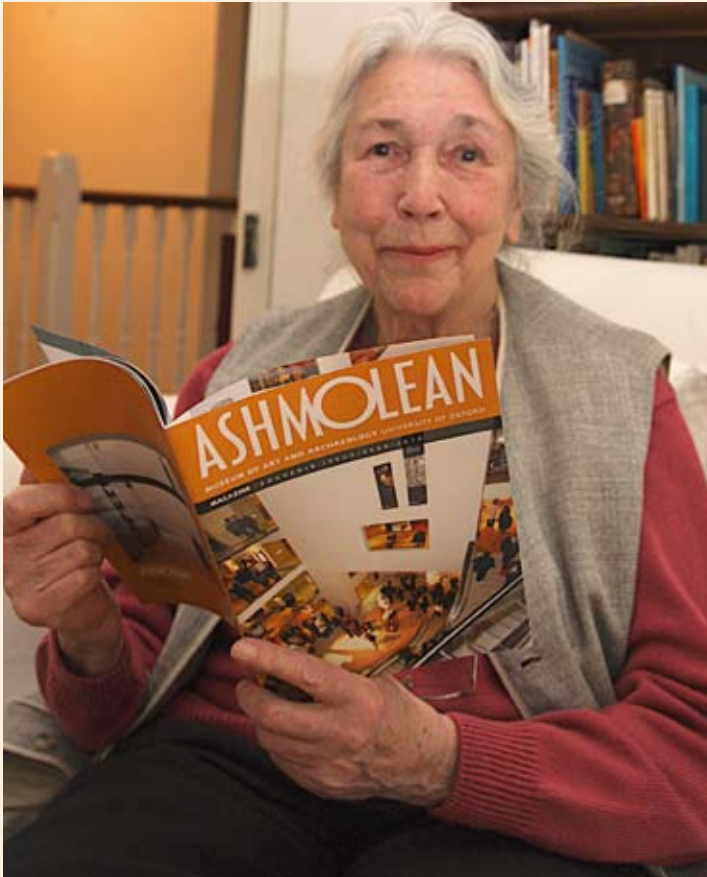


More choice for Audrey

We look at how the council's personal budget scheme has brightened the life of Audrey Low from Ventnor



Audrey Low cherishes and guards the independence she is able to maintain at her seaside home near Steephill.

And determination and an independence of spirit are characteristics Audrey has in no short supply.

For 20 years Audrey managed and ran the shop at Oxford's world famous Ashmolean Museum, masterminding the range of books and other items to complement each new exhibition.

"It was the most marvellous of jobs, I loved every minute of it," said Audrey, who moved to the Island to be close to her daughter and grandchildren.

But just under two years ago, Audrey's natural mettle was put to the test when she

was struck down by a stroke.

She was in hospital for two months and when she returned home, carers were organised to visit every morning and help with personal care.

"They were very helpful and an occupational therapist even organised special handrails for me inside and outside my home," said Audrey.

"But I didn't feel that I really needed care every morning and so it was reduced to three mornings a week, with help for things like making the bed and taking a shower."

Audrey lost full mobility in her left arm and left leg as a result of her stroke, but valued being able to live in her own home, comforted by the presence of her daughter living a few miles away.

It was her daughter who suggested she consider applying for the council's personal budget scheme.

"My daughter said she had heard about personal budgets and thought it would be a good idea for me. She knew of someone at Newport who would be ideal as a regular carer. I thought this might be better than lots of different carers coming in, which had been the case," said Audrey.

Audrey's daughter brought her prospective new carer, Mel, around for a cup of coffee, and they hit it off straight away.

"Having a regular, dedicated carer in Mel, has made a real difference and has introduced a more relaxed and spontaneous approach to my care," said Audrey.

"There is less of a routine to it all, which particular suits me. With Mel I can sit down and have a cup of coffee and choose what I want to do. We might go for a walk to the

park, or along the esplanade.

"The extra variety it brings to my care has made a great difference. Mel comes in two or three times a week, for a total of about six hours. She assists with all kinds of things including some of the basic tasks I was being helped with before: such as putting clothes in the washing machine, hanging up clothes etc."

But Audrey said now her care is less structured, more akin to a visit from a friend who she can relax and have a chat with, or go outside and join for a walk.

Under the personal budget scheme, which she has been on since the start of January, Audrey has a dedicated bank account to receive the funds she then uses to pay Mel for her help.

"The scheme has given me more choice and personal independence when it comes to deciding my care. I'm very happy with how it has worked out."

Pilot scheme to help plan your support

Three organisations have been selected to work with the council on a six month pilot scheme giving vulnerable people more choice over their lives.

Age Concern Isle of Wight (in partnership with the Isle of Wight Advocacy Trust), the Isle of Wight Citizens' Advice Bureau and Help and Care will work with each other and the council's social care staff to offer information and advice on personal budgets and 'self-directed' support, as well as offering brokerage.

Through the scheme, vulnerable people, their families and carers will receive help from a broker to plan the support and services to meet the individual's care needs.

The pilot scheme will be used to help shape future services.

If you feel you could benefit from taking part in the scheme, please call 823653 or speak with your care manager.