



**Pictured:** Michael Chandler with Lee White, Way Forward programme manager

**More and more people with a care need across the Island are benefiting under the new personal budget scheme. Here we see how it is changing the way a major care provider operates...**

It would be hard to find a greater advocate for personal budgets than 27-year-old Michael Chandler.

Michael, from Sandown, says the initiative has made a massive difference to his life over the past two years.

And one of the biggest changes has come in the past 12 months, with his personal budget opening the door to a whole range of activities through the Way Forward scheme.

Way Forward is the name of a new approach to care provision run by the charity Osel, and is based at the Osel site in Wacklands Lane, Newchurch.

Two years ago Osel was asked to prepare for changes in the way it operates the important services it provides for people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities or mental illness.

Lee White, Way Forward programme manager, explained: "In the past Osel had a block contract with the council to provide a certain level of daycare service. Under the new personalisation or personal budget scheme we are effectively employed by

those we assist, our customers, to tailor a service suited to them.

"They say what they would like to do in terms of activities to help their quality of life, and we will set it up, with their personal budget providing the funding."

The personal budget approach for Osel has been given the title, Way Forward, and activities it has helped provide have included work experience, job support, and social and leisure activities ranging from swimming and gym sessions to cookery and healthy eating.

"There is so much that we are able to help with, and the switch to a personal budget approach has certainly opened up the options for our customers," she said.

"We support about 120 people, with about 20 people a day using the facility here at Newchurch, but the majority are out in the community doing the things they want to do with their lives. Under the switch to personalisation we have become a 24 hours a day, seven days a week operation, rather than a 9am to 5pm provision.

"The numbers of our customers who have their own personal budgets is building and we have a lot more being assessed for the scheme."

Osel was originally set up in the late 1980s, providing therapeutic daycare provision through a social horticultural enterprise at the Newchurch site. Since then it has also added its Wight Crystal mineral water service and a range of other services, including a charity shop at Shanklin.

With the move to personal budget funding the horticultural side at Newchurch will close from June this year, but Lee stressed: "We are actually expanding and developing; there is just a switch of emphasis. None of our customers should miss out – we intend to find something new for them all."

Working alongside Lee is Julie Sandford, employment services manager, whose team helps prepare people for work and supports those in work, particularly people with a mental health condition.

Julie said: "We are wholeheartedly behind the personalisation approach, and we are seeing how it transforms people's lives. It is about giving people a far wider choice and greater control and say on their activities and experiences."

It means rather than a limited range of daycare provision, a far wider variety of activities can now be experienced.

Michael Chandler fully endorsed this approach: "I have been coming here for a year and it has been terrific for me."

Through his personal budget, and with the help of his support worker, he has been able to take part in a wide variety of activities at Newchurch; from playing the drums to playing pool, and regularly meeting new friends.

His personal budget has also helped him to live independently in his own home and with everyday activities such as going shopping.

Julie said: "The most rewarding part of what we do is seeing how it changes people's lives for the better."

Lee added: "We are really passionate about the personal budget approach here. Although the change has naturally led to some concerns for people, it is clear how it offering so many more possibilities in many lives."

If you would like to find out more about the Way Forward programme and personal budgets, you can contact Lee White on 867324, email: [lee.jenner@osel-tu.demon.co.uk](mailto:lee.jenner@osel-tu.demon.co.uk) or Julie Sandford on 523000, email: [julie.sandford@osel-tu.demon.co.uk](mailto:julie.sandford@osel-tu.demon.co.uk)