



From institutionalisation to freedom... **my story**

Peter Gauterin, aged 56 years, from Wrexham would like to share his story. Institutionalised from the age of 4 years, he tells a painful story of being moved around, being abused, being locked up to finally becoming free. He has lived in the community now for 30 years. This is Peter's story, told through an interview with Karen Warner, Information Services Manager, Learning Disability Wales.

A childhood of care homes

I was born in Wrexham. At the age of 4 years old they said I had psychiatric and mental health problems. Under the Mental Health Act I was taken away from my parents and taken into care. I wasn't to be "free" again until 22 years later. I was sent away to a number of care homes where there were strict rules. Some care homes I stayed in were not in Wales. I spent some time in Liverpool.

10 years of abuse in a secure hospital

When I was 15 years old I went to a secure hospital in England. I was there for 10 years between 1970 – 1980. I slept on a ward with 20 beds. I was locked in at night. I could not choose my own food. I didn't have my own money. I never went out. Certain rooms were used as 'punishment rooms'. It was hell. I had to scrub the floors, it was like slave labour. The staff purposely made the

floor dirty with their heels and then watch me have to clean it.

For the first 5 years I had to get used to the bullying. I was kicked and hit by the staff. They would kick the cleaning bucket over. I liked building airfix models. The staff would kick them and crush them. I put up with the abuse every single day. I had to put up with it. If I ever said anything, no-one ever listened. So after 5 years of suffering I just remained silent. I spent another 5 years in there. 2 other 'patients escaped from the hospital because of the pain and torment they were suffering.

Bryn-y-Neuadd Hospital

I was then sent to Bryn-y-Neuadd learning disability hospital in North Wales. It was better there. I was in a dormitory. Staff treated me better. I love building models. I used to help one of the nurses there whose grandfather wanted to build a Spitfire.

Escape from hostel in Blackpool

I then got moved again to a hostel in Blackpool. I escaped. I went as far as Queensferry. The Police found me. They phoned my mother and she collected me.

My Mum back at last

So from 1983 I stayed with my mum. I had a couple of other moves after that, and I was suffering seizures quite a lot. In 1990 I moved in with my mum in Wrexham in her home where I currently live today.

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I don't have anything to do with my father nor my brothers. They don't visit. I have never met my brother's children – I haven't seen them for 5 years.

Sadly my mum died in 1995. My mum left the house to me in her will.

Support from social services, citizen directed support and Ling Trust

I then had help from social services for 5 hours a day. They made my meals and did my housework. I went shopping with them but I let them get the shopping. I was more interested in walking around the toy section.

3 years ago I had a citizen directed support budget from Wrexham social services. I got to employ my own staff including Dave who helps me with many things. Ling Trust sorted out my service (they act as a service broker).

Ling Trust are a registered charity. They support people to get the right help, care, housing,

education, leisure, jobs and to manage people's own budgets.

I do have some control over my money. I get £20 a week and shopping money. I don't have full access to my bank account because I find it difficult to say no to people. One time someone knocked on my door and wanted me to pay £2,000 for a vacuum cleaner. So I am happy with this arrangement. It suits me.

Person centred planning

Through the Ling Trust over the last few years I have been able to develop a person centred plan which has meant I have been able to look and see what I want from my life. I have had great help with this from Anna at social services. Anna helped me look at lots of new and different things to do in my life. This has helped me go on some great trips. I have been to the Natural History Museum and British Museum in London. I went on the London Eye and

visited the Aquarium. I went to a conference in Manchester about self-directed support.

I do quite a lot of social things with Ling Trust such as barbecues, Christmas parties, summer fetes and Halloween. I am on Wrexham social services committee where I have my say.

Impact of Cuts

Sadly my citizen directed support budget has been cut back. This has really affected my life a lot. My hours were cut from 5 to 2 hours a day. I can't go on trips anymore. I also used to do carriage riding but I can't do that anymore either. I can't go out as much now. I now have to do on-line shopping as I don't have time to go to the supermarket. Dave used to play chess with me and help me with my models but he now hasn't got time for this anymore. I have less social interaction than before. I am learning to cope with having less hours.





Hobbies

I like playing computer games and doing on-line shopping. I watch TV. I got to the PHAB Club every Wednesday evening and meet my friends there. I love building models. You will see by the photos I build ships, planes, dinosaurs. I have built a solar system.

I love racehorses. I went to the Grand National a few years ago. I have also met Red Rum.

My future

I would like more company. I would like to see HMS Victory in Portsmouth. I am happy with my life now. I am more sociable and friendly with people. I am more honest now as I trust the people who are around me. I used to have a lot of epileptic seizures. I haven't had one for years now. At an all Wales Person Centred Planning meeting I shared a poem I wrote. Everyone was so

impressed they wanted to be able to share it with more people, so it is on our website here as a video clip
<http://www.learningdisabilitywales.org.uk/person-centered-planning.php>

Here is the poem in Peter's words:

Peter's Poem: Peter's thoughtful insights

*Person centred planning and what it means to me
Is that I am valued as a person within my community
I am not asking for special treatment, something that's not already mine and if you treat me as a person then we will get along just fine.
To live each day just like you do and just be in control
To make mistakes along the way and recognise my role.
To be included and respected and my wishes listened to.
I don't really feel that's asking*

*much if that's all I ask from you
It identifies capabilities and works on proactive positive things
It lets me face reality and work on problems real life brings
I want to make decisions on simple little things that's said
To choose what time I socialise, what I time I go to bed
I don't need risk assessing on what you regard as normal things
I want to look life in the eye and face the challenge that it brings
To me it is not a pot of gold or unrealistic dreams
It just highlights I am a person, not a project or a scheme
Thank you for your patience and for listening here today
To let me stand before you and let me have my say
But I really must be going now I am off to live my life and who knows if I'm lucky I might bag myself a wife!*

Thank you all
Peter

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