

Lena's Story

Lena's journey with Alzheimer's began when she was diagnosed in September 2023, and shortly after, her family reached out for help through our Dementia Coordinator service. Lena, a Polish woman who had moved to the UK about ten years ago to be closer to her children, lives in a housing association property with her husband, Bartek. Neither of them speak English, and while they've settled into life here, learning the language was not something they ever pursued. Fortunately, their daughter, who lives nearby, speaks fluent English and became their vital link in navigating the support system.

Our team received the referral through the memory clinic and quickly arranged a home visit to assess Lena's situation. During the visit, Lena's daughter acted as the translator, helping to bridge the language barrier. It was clear from the beginning that Lena was comfortable in her surroundings, her smile and relaxed body language giving a gentle reassurance despite her condition.

Understanding that communication would be a challenge, we located dementia-related materials printed in Polish from the Alzheimer's Society, ensuring both Lena and Bartek could be better informed about the diagnosis. As we proceeded with the assessment, we learned that Lena had not yet made any important decisions about her future care or finances, and her daughter, despite her love and devotion, was beginning to feel the strain of balancing her caregiving responsibilities with her own family and business.

The conversation gently revealed that Lena's daughter wasn't receiving any support as a carer and didn't know where to begin. Together, we identified practical steps to help ease the situation. We suggested applying for attendance allowance and discussed the importance of a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) and how her daughter could become her appointee with the Department of Working Pensions (DWP).

During our conversation, Lena's struggles with managing her medication surfaced. The routine of picking up prescriptions and taking her medication had become overwhelming, partly because of the language barrier and her dementia. Both Lena and her daughter agreed that an assessment of Lena's care needs might offer some relief, particularly in managing her medication. We reassured them that we would assist in making this happen.

Lena also expressed feelings of isolation, asking through her daughter if she could have a Polish-speaking befriender. She longed for a connection to someone who understood her language and culture. Additionally, she asked us to contact her housing officer to let them know she was now receiving support, but unfortunately, the housing officer couldn't offer any additional help at this time. Still, knowing we were involved gave Lena a sense of security.

As our visit concluded, Lena's daughter shared how much this support meant to both of them. She said this was the first time they truly felt heard and supported. Progress was already being made as social services had arranged a Polish-speaking translator for Lena's care assessment, and the Department of Working Pensions (DWP) had also reached out to schedule an appointment with a Polish-speaking representative. Furthermore, Lena's medication would now be delivered weekly in a dosette box, which brought both mother and daughter some much-needed peace of mind.

In the coming weeks, Lena's daughter was set to receive a carer's assessment through Involve, and we would continue to be there every step of the way. We assured them that we were still

searching for a Polish-speaking befriender and would explore all possible avenues to make that happen. Additionally, we committed to following up on the appointments, checking in regularly, and providing ongoing support as Lena and her family navigated this challenging journey.

A few days later, we received a heartfelt message from Lena's daughter:

"I really appreciate what you are doing for us. I feel like I have got support which I never had before—you are amazing."

This simple note affirmed that our efforts were making a difference in their lives. We will continue to support Lena and her family, ensuring they feel listened to, supported, and never alone.