



## **Martyna's Story**

Martyna, a Polish-speaking single mother residing in Sunderland, was registered on the *Back in Control* Project in 2023 due to her experience of work exploitation—she had been underpaid for her annual leave and was therefore treated unfairly in her employment. She moved to Sunderland from the south of England where she fell victim to racial abuse. Martyna and her family were provided emergency accommodation by Causeway. She first approached our charity to seek assistance with managing her benefits and support for her young son, Jason, who has autism and ADHD. From the beginning, it was clear that Martyna required holistic support across multiple areas—benefits, education, healthcare, and emotional well-being.

The initial support involved updating Martyna's Universal Credit (UC) account with her earnings. At the same time, she needed help applying for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for Jason. We successfully completed the DLA application, which resulted in an award of the middle care and low mobility components, amounting to £95 per week. Subsequently, we also supported Martyna in applying for and securing Carer's Allowance, backdated to September 2023, providing her with a vital financial lifeline.

Martyna had also missed the deadline to apply for the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) for Jason, as she was unaware that a separate application was required for her son and believed it would be automatically processed alongside her own. We submitted a late paper application and were later informed that Jason was granted Indefinite Leave to Remain. During this process, we also assisted in the re-registration of Jason's birth and its translation for consulate use.

A significant area of support involved Jason's education. Martyna reported that Jason was struggling to transition into his new school. The school struggled to cope with his behaviour and he was even suspended due to an incident with a teacher. In response, we contacted the school and Sunderland City Council, and escalated the issue to Together for Children. Their response revealed that Jason had no Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), leaving the school to manage his complex needs without additional support.

We advocated for Martyna by initiating communication with SENDIASS and attending school meetings as her interpreter. This included a meeting with the school SENDCo and Jason's 1-1 teacher. Eventually, a new EHCP was drafted, and after feedback from a Polish psychologist and Independent SEND Consultant—whom we found and arranged an online consultation with—it was revised to better suit Jason's needs.

We continued to liaise with local authorities, including Together for Children and the Council's Births, Deaths, and Marriages department. We submitted grant applications to the Family Fund, resulting in Martyna receiving a computer for Jason. We also referred her to

Love Amelia, enabling her to secure a Christmas gift for her son. Further financial support was arranged through the Household Support Fund and a £150 Tesco gift card to help with essential costs.

With ongoing advocacy, Jason was eventually enrolled in a school that matched his special educational and emotional needs. We completed the registration and free school meals applications, and soon after, Jason began attending school full-time. Martyna reported a significant improvement, both in Jason's behaviour and in her own well-being. She began engaging with CYPS (Children and Young People's Services), attending meetings to support her role as a parent.

Martyna has expressed profound gratitude for the support she has received. In her own words, "Bardzo dużo wam zawdzięczam, dużo mi pomogliście, i jestem wdzięczna wam bardzo," which translates to: "I owe you a great deal, you helped me a lot, and I am very grateful to you."

This case is a strong example of the charity's commitment to holistic, person-centred support—empowering clients through advocacy, practical assistance, and emotional care, making lasting improvements to their quality of life.