

Dorota's story

'Aphasia Support' – previously known as 'Speak with IT' - are a registered charity who support people with aphasia. Aphasia is a language disorder which affects a person's ability to speak, read, write and understand language. They were invited by Locala's Speech and Language Therapy team to run a weekly session at Dewsbury Health Centre, where they use downloaded 'apps' to help people re discover communication skills such as word finding, pronunciation and writing. For more information;

<https://www.aphasiasupport.org/>

Locala's Adult Therapy Service provides treatment, rehabilitation, advice and support to people living in Kirklees. The service includes physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and dietetics.



Mateusz helps Dorota tell her story: "It was 2017 and we had gone to Saltfleet near Cleethorpes for a day on the beach. Dorota had a seizure – she had never had one before – and we rang 999. Dorota was taken to hospital. They checked her out and said she was ok but referred her to an Epileptic Clinic. We were told to expect to wait a few months for an appointment." Whilst waiting, Dorota experienced two more seizures. After the third seizure, Dorota was scanned and a brain tumour was found. Ten days after urgent surgery, Dorota returned home to her husband and children, having been told the devastating news that her future looked bleak. Mateusz says, "**We said, whatever happens, we will carry on as long as we can.**"

Hospital care: Dorota joined a clinical trial and had radiotherapy. Unfortunately, the tumour grew bigger and Dorota needed surgery again. She recovered and family life continued, but Dorota took a turn for the worse in 2019, when Mateusz noticed she was dazed, "**like on autopilot.**" Dorota was found to have fluid on the brain and was told nothing could be done. She was given just weeks to live. However, much to everyone's surprise, the swelling dispersed, Dorota's health improved, and the tumour stopped growing. The couple explain that Dorota's medical team call her a "**miracle!**" She continues to be monitored and has a brain scan every 6 months.

Time for rehab: Dorota was referred to Locala's Adult Therapy service and is very positive about her experience, especially with Anita from the team, who as an 'Assistant Practitioner,' supported Dorota with physiotherapy, occupational therapy *and* speech and language therapy. Pain made it hard for Dorota to use her right hand, so the team suggested different pain killers and liaised with her GP. It was a game changer for Dorota, who could then fully participate with her exercise programme, using pegs, putty and theraband to improve the strength and dexterity of her hand and arm. Within 8-10 weeks, the exercises improved Dorota's ability to get dressed, prepare food and use cutlery.

Communication: Speech and Language therapy continues to challenge Dorota, but she feels that she is improving. She can often remember the Polish word but not the English word – the couple are originally from Poland - and sentence structure can differ between the two languages. At the 'Aphasia Support' sessions, Dorota is really impressed with James, a Speech and Language therapy student who volunteers there. He has worked hard to understand how these differences between English and Polish may affect Dorota's progress. What's more, he really makes her laugh, which Mateus and Dorota both feel is important. When the therapists first suggested Dorota should join the 'Aphasia Support' sessions she was nervous, but now says, "**It's good to try**". Mateusz says she can now "**says things clearly enough for me to understand.**" Using the apps to practice speech and language skills takes a lot of concentration and Dorota says she needs to "**Go back home and sleep.**" She plans to continue using the apps when the sessions end and has found some Polish apps to try too.

New member of the family: Winston the Sausage Dog has recently joined the family. Dorota is enjoying short walks with him and appreciates his company when the family are out.