

# Adult Social Services

## Gemma's Story

### About

**Gemma is 47 years old and lives with her husband, 32-year-old stepdaughter and 6-year-old daughter. They live in a bungalow and, on their land, have animals including horses, sheep, and goats.**

Gemma has Ehlers-Danlos syndrome which is a genetic condition affecting connective tissue. Connective tissue provides support in skin, tendons, ligaments, blood vessels, internal organs and bones.

Gemma also lives with a lumbar spine disease and mental health issues which affect her day-to-day living.

Gemma cares for her stepdaughter who has Autism and a learning disability and dedicates much of her time to looking after her family.

### Contact with Adult Social Services

Gemma referred herself to Adult Social Services after her health problems left her struggling to lift and do things around the house. Her goal was to become more independent and to better equip herself to manage her mental health.

Gemma lives on the border of North Somerset. Whilst her Council services are with North Somerset, her doctor's surgery is not in the same district. This has caused some problems in getting access to the mental health services she needs.



## Experience of Adult Social Services

Gemma has had quite a challenging experience with Social Services in previous years and in other districts. Social Worker, Sarah, was introduced to her in 2022 to work with Gemma to achieve her goals to be more independent and to access the mental health services she needs.

Sarah worked with Gemma to arrange a Direct Payment. Gemma receives funding directly from the Council and arranges her own care and support. This allows Gemma to have choice and control over how her support needs are met. She employs a Personal Assistant for four hours a week to complete daily chores around the house and support Gemma to get out and about. This support has made a huge difference and allowed her to go out in the community, take her daughter swimming and collect her from school.

Gemma's health services are under a different district to North Somerset, and they are responsible for providing mental health services. Gemma is having trouble accessing this service as North Somerset Council provide her Adult Social Care and support.

Gemma described her Social Worker, Sarah, as ***“Amazing, really brilliant. She has gone above and beyond and tried so hard to get around the cross-boundary issue. She is on my side and has sat in with me at meetings. She advocates for me and looks at how things affect the whole family”***.

Gemma's social worker continues to work with Gemma and said ***“I have completed a few Care Act Assessments with Gemma and try to support her in finding ways to become more independent and to find appropriate support to manage her current conditions.***

***I have been supporting Gemma largely with accessing resources and feeling empowered to discuss her needs openly and complain/discuss issues as needed with other professionals. I have tried working with Gemma to ensure her whole family is involved in the process and her home dynamic is taken into account”***.

They are currently working together to organise a meeting with the mental health team in the neighbouring council to discuss the challenges Gemma is experiencing accessing services.

Previously Gemma described her experiences of local services as individual and the whole family situation was not taken into account. She feels that it is important to be seen as a family and to consider what is best for all of them. Now she explains that she is valued and spoken to with respect, and her Social Worker, Sarah, doesn't make her feel judged. ***“I feel I am in good hands with Sarah, and I trust she will do the best for me. She tells me about all the options, and we look at them together”***.

Sarah visited the Equipment Demonstration Centre in Weston with Gemma to speak to an Occupational Therapist (OT) about aids and adaptations that could help her around the home. Gemma said it is nice to have someone on her side.

Gemma and Sarah continue to work towards resolving the cross-boundary issue so Gemma can access the services she needs.