



CH*OWO
ALE BOJOWO

THINGS
ARE
F*CKED
BUT WE
DON'T GIVE UP
(IN MEMORY OF
THOSE WE'VE
LOST)

Other Voices 01

Kasia Makowska

Other Voices series introduction

'...[I]t is not difference which immobilises us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken.'

*Audre Lorde,
'The Transformation of Silence into Action'*

Litigation is at the core of PILC's work. We bring legal cases on behalf of oppressed groups and individuals and in solidarity with grassroots activists fighting for radical change. In our short lifetime we've won victories that have helped counter some of the worst excesses of state surveillance, social cleansing, gender-based violence and structural racism.

The courts are a necessary terrain in the struggle for a better world. Yet we're painfully aware of the limits of legal action. The law is a product of the socio-economic system we live under. It is set up to reinforce that system. The remedies offered by judges or public inquiries will always fall short when it comes to addressing systemic harm.

Since our foundation as a law centre we've tried to hammer home the wider social and political implications of the cases we take on. More recently we've undertaken radical rights education and worked to raise awareness of how public law can help communities resist injustice. In 2020 we launched a blog and began publishing advocacy reports, personal testimonies and policy analysis. We've come to see researching and telling compelling stories about how the law operates in our society as a vital complement to our day-to-day litigation and casework.

Our new series of publications builds on this strand of PILC's work by making space for voices that tend to be marginalised in mainstream legal, policy and human-rights discourses. With a focus on PILC's priority area of migrant destitution, Other Voices centres the practices and analysis of frontline workers and activists, as well as people and communities treated by our (legal-political-economic) system as marginal or disposable—who inhabit, as Denise Ferreira Da Silva writes, 'that place where what should happen to nobody happens every day'.²

We don't see this series as an exercise in inclusion or 'user voice'. Making the tent bigger is pointless if the rules of the game stay the same. We'd like these publications to upset the terms of the 'policy debate' around migration and homelessness—its language, its horizons and the power relations expressed through its very silences.

Our contributors—PILC staff, clients and friends—speak and write with eloquence, intellect and deep feeling, challenging received narratives and leaden theories of change. They offer a sobering account of the way things are now.

Through the energy and spirit of resistance they embody, they also gesture towards a future worth fighting for.

*Benjamin Morgan,
research and communications coordinator, PILC*

¹ Audre Lorde, 'The transformation of silence into action' in *Sister outsider: essays and speeches*, Crossing Press (1984): 40.

² Denise Ferreira Da Silva, 'No bodies: law, raciality and violence', *Griffith Law Review* 18: 2 (2009): 212–236.

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*'THINGS ARE
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*(IN MEMORY OF
THOSE WE'VE LOST)*

About the author:

Kasia Makowska is EU homeless rights adviser at the Public Interest Law Centre. Since 2017 she has volunteered at Akwaaba, a social centre for migrants.

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Things are f*cked but we don't give up

We offer this short publication in memory of the homeless Europeans Kasia has worked with who've died over the past few years. Some of the people whose lives and deaths it narrates were clients in her role at PILC. Others she met through Akwaaba, a social centre for migrants. Most she knew through both places.

The piece has been painful to write (for Kasia) and edit (for Benjamin, who also knew some of the people featured). After months of passing drafts back and forth, we still didn't feel like it was finished. Eventually we concluded that this sense of lack or loss wasn't going anywhere.

We've been worried about how the piece will be received. We don't want it to be read as a sentimental list of unfortunate souls. We mean it as a tribute to some complicated people whom we miss deeply, and as an inquiry into the day-to-day workings of the system that helped kill them.

Part of the violence of that system is a violence of representation. Writing of black women in the USA, Audre Lorde notes the paradox of their having 'on the one hand always been highly visible, and [...] on the other hand [...] rendered invisible'.¹ Something comparable has been done to the people Kasia memorializes below. The media, national politicians, local authorities and some charities have spent years cementing their image as 'economic migrants', 'unskilled workers' and scrounging 'gypsies', who 'choose to sleep rough'. Everybody already knows everything about homeless Central and Eastern Europeans in the UK; few have enquired into the specificity of the oppression they face.

As we've shown elsewhere ², working-class Europeans' systematic exclusion from social assistance and the targeting for deportation of those rendered destitute as a result are among the great un(der)told stories of the 'hostile environment'.³ Well before Brexit, the 'dewhitening'⁴ of some EU citizens from Central and Eastern Europe heightened their exposure to racism, defined by Ruth Wilson Gilmore as '*the state-sanctioned or extra legal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death*'.⁵

'Things are f*cked but we don't give up'. Kasia's memorial gets at the material and bureaucratic textures of dying-while-a-homeless-foreigner. She documents the efforts of friends and support workers to help people access services while they were alive, and put their affairs in order after their death. The true stories she tells here render vivid the relationship between personal pain, structural injustice and collective resistance.

We hope the piece will upset conventional ideas about how homeless people live and die, as well as provoking interest in, and solidarity with, the struggles of European migrant workers in the UK after Brexit.

Three more people Kasia knows have passed away in the past year; their stories will have to wait for the sequel.

Kasia Makowska,
EU homeless rights adviser, PILC

Benjamin Morgan,
research & communication coordinator, PILC

² Morgan, B, *Still Here: Defending the rights of homeless EU citizens after Brexit and Covid-19*. Public Interest Law Centre (2021).

³ Morgan B, *What fresh hell: UK policies targeting homeless migrants for deportation after Brexit and Covid-19*. *Critical Social Policy*, (2021).

⁴ Fox JE, Morosanu L and Szilassy E (2012) *The Racialization of the New European Migration to the UK*. *Sociology* 46(4): 680-695.

⁵ Gilmore, R, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (2007).

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About the Dying Homeless Project.

The Dying Homeless Project, run by Museum of Homelessness since 2019, has two purposes.

First and foremost, we remember with love and dignity people who have died whilst homeless. The human cost of the homelessness and housing crisis is far too high. Individuals can be forgotten or ignored during their lives and also in death. This project aims to remember and honour each and every human behind the stark statistics.

Secondly, we work with the findings of this project to campaign for change. We are working hard with partners in local government, law and health to prevent further unnecessary deaths. Where necessary, we hold those responsible for premature and preventable deaths to account

Things are f*cked but we don't give up (in memory of those we've lost)

By Kasia Makowska

We'd agreed to make a contribution to the Dying Homeless Project but for a long time I couldn't get myself to write it. 'Make a list of everyone you knew that died' is not a light task. How to do justice to people's lives, make others see them as I knew them—as more than just a foreign-sounding name or a barely recorded statistic?

It can feel hard to separate the way the people I'm writing about in this piece died from the way they lived: the bureaucratic indifference, the solidarity of friends and the unconcern of strangers, the trail of material objects left behind...

I don't feel equipped to 'tell people's stories'. There were parts people didn't want to tell and places where it didn't seem right to ask. Trying to capture a life can feel like its own kind of violence. So I've just written something about what I remember of people and of the time we spent together. And I've tried to talk about how we lost them.

I remember how I felt about Polish rough sleepers before I started volunteering at Akwaaba. I didn't see the issues they were facing as political at all. I remember thinking that they didn't really need help, that this was just how they chose to be.

The more I got to know the guys, the more I came to realise that what I had seen as their choice or 'misfortune' was not a matter of individual deficiency but systemic marginalisation, death by a thousand cuts. I also grew to care for them, and I hope this piece will help you see them through my eyes.

Mykola

February
2018

Mykola was the first person I knew that was homeless and died. I knew him from Akwaaba, the social centre for migrants where I started volunteering in 2017.

He was Ukrainian, about fifty, and spoke Polish. He liked playing chess and joking around. He had a dent in his skull from being beaten up long ago. He was undocumented, another Akwaaba volunteer was trying to help him sort out his immigration status.

Mykola died in his hideout at a construction site where he'd been sleeping with his Polish friend Janek'. I got a call from Janek one afternoon while I was at work (I have a background in biomedical research and was working in science communications at the time), he told me flatly that Mykola had been dead since the morning and he didn't know what to do. He'd just been walking the streets pointlessly.

A more experienced volunteer said someone should notify the police, it would look worse for Janek if we didn't. But he was terrified of the idea: 'I was staying there with him, are they going to lock me up?' Janek wasn't too well himself, he'd had a stroke in 2016.

I didn't know what to say, but I left work early and went to meet him. Janek wanted to show me Mykola's body, but when we got to the hideout I couldn't bring myself to look past his shoes. Instead, I went with Janek to Tottenham Police Station, where we waited for hours in a narrow corridor, watching the cops behind the counter filling in forms and answering the phone. The police weren't too bad, maybe because Janek showed up with a middle class-looking friend.

I should say that the hideout was directly behind the police station, a few steps from where Janek was giving his statement to the police. Mykola would have enjoyed the looks on their faces when we told them where the body was.

We left the police station late in the evening. Janek didn't want to sleep at the hideout, so we offered to book him into a hotel for the night, but he said he'd find some friends to stay with. He didn't have access to benefits at that point, but a few months later he got a flat through Hackney council. (It was a nice moment when he got the keys, I hugged him and told him I couldn't believe it, though it turned out he'd had permanent residence for some time, so it really shouldn't have taken so long...)

We never found out how Mykola died. We told the police he had a sister in Ukraine but they didn't seem bothered about tracing her.

Janek wanted to go to the funeral, he'd ask me about it from time to time, but the police couldn't tell us anything about that either and I didn't have the experience to make the relevant enquiries. It was my first death....

Months later I got a call from the police. They said they were ringing about my friend that died, but all the information was wrong—they gave me a completely different name, date of birth and nationality. I wondered if Mykola had been using another identity, or if they'd mixed him up with someone else. Another dead homeless guy in Tottenham...

Jurek

June
2018



Jurek volunteered at Akwaaba, he'd been going there since before I joined and was well known in the community. I heard he'd lost his entire family in an accident years before, but I didn't know the details.

Somewhere along the line he'd had a tracheotomy. It was hard to understand him when he spoke, so he used to carry a pen and paper around. Sometimes a younger Polish guy, Marcin, would translate for him.

It was Marcin who called to tell me Jurek was dead. There are lots of uncertainties and gaps in the story, and we never found out what really happened. There'd been some kind of traffic accident (some said he'd been hit by a bus, others by a motorbike) and he'd been admitted to hospital. At some point he'd discharged himself—more likely, walked out—and gone back to his hideout. Someone told me he went to sleep and never woke up.

Some Akwaaba volunteers organised a memorial for Jurek. They wrote a nice tribute to him which we translated into Polish, and we printed it together with a picture of him in his Arsenal T-shirt. Here's an extract:

"...One thing Jurek always communicated perfectly [...] was how much he cared about the community and all it contains.

He expressed this love and kindness through his actions, quietly putting up bunting, taking down chairs, overseeing the library, ferrying plates with a smile, asking for nothing. Week after week..."

The local Polish church, where many homeless Eastern Europeans go for lunch, also held a service in Jurek's memory. I remember asking the priest why it wasn't being held in the main church, and him saying it was because there weren't many attendees. But the chapel was overflowing...

The priest didn't seem to know much about Jurek, but he used the opportunity to preach on the importance of sobriety and "making responsible choices".

Wojtek

January
2019



Wojtek was another friend of Janek, and it was Janek who kept telling me Wojtek needed help with his housing. I think he was sleeping at North Middlesex hospital, in the accident and emergency waiting room. But when I spoke to him about maybe getting accommodation, he was a bit dismissive, he'd change the subject.

It took months to convince him to get housing advice. In the meantime we offered to refer him to Hackney Winter Night Shelter, but he said it was 'too much faff'. He was in and out of hospital but I didn't know the details. When I asked about his health he'd give vague, evasive answers. Stubborn old man.

He drew France in Akwaaba's World Cup 2018 sweepstake and won a Nando's voucher. He wanted to give it away but I eventually convinced him to come for a meal with me in Dalston. I can be stubborn as well...

He had the spicy chicken and I had the veggie burger, and he told me about his life. He'd worked as an engineer for oil companies, on offshore platforms and in different countries in the Middle East. Once he got going he talked and talked, he didn't seem bothered about the food. I remember feeling relieved that we didn't get funny looks from the other diners.

We eventually got him an appointment to see a lawyer about his housing situation, but then he stopped answering his phone. Tomek, another Polish volunteer from Akwaaba, offered to call round the hospitals, and rang me a few hours later and said "it's not good news".

Apparently Wojtek had had very advanced cancer and been undergoing treatment for months. Maybe he didn't want to trouble us with his health stuff, or maybe he didn't understand the letters the hospital were sending him. I never got a chance to ask him.

Ewa

*August
2019*

Ewa had been part of a group of homeless Polish people who slept in the waiting areas at North Middlesex A&E.

She was middle-aged and always had perfect hair and makeup. She'd recently been housed, and she was in the process of getting her disability benefits sorted—someone was helping her with her PIP. I don't know what exactly happened to her, but her friend Jakub, another guy sleeping in North Mids, told me she used to drink a lot. I wouldn't have guessed it.

Jola

*August
2019*

Jola died a few months after her husband, who I didn't know. I helped her send his Polish national ID back to his kids in Poland, and she asked if the children would get any kind of bereavement payment. I said I didn't think so.

I remember her complaining about her work delivering leaflets, how her legs were killing her. She was in her mid-fifties, and she'd been walking up hills and up and down stairs during the heatwave.

The job was through one of those shitty agencies: they drop you off in a van to an area that needs leafleting, then pick you up at the end of the day. 14-hour days, for peanuts...

She used to help out in the Akwaaba kitchen, one year she made a really nice Polish Christmas meal. I think it was either bigos (a kind of hunter's stew) or mushroom soup.

I can't remember if we found out how she died, maybe a heart thing, it was sudden. (I remember I was working for PILC by then.)

I didn't know Ewa and Jola well so I don't have much to say about them.

Fox

October
2019

Fox was the first rough sleeper I met in London. On my first day at Akwaaba I wasn't sure how to be useful or who I should speak to. He saw me looking shy and lost, and invited me for a cup of tea and to play chess with him

A few of his friends sat round, ready to watch him destroy me. I competed as well as I could, but his chess skills were hard to match when he wasn't too drunk. Fox was his nickname because his surname had the Polish word for 'fox' in it.

He was one of the grumpiest people at the social centre. He wasn't interested in any help or advice, when we organised info sessions or workshops he never came. In winter he'd sneak out of the noisy lunch room—we were renting the space from a local primary school—and fall asleep in one of the classrooms. Or he'd nap in the laptop area in front of his favourite film, The Count of Monte Cristo ('not that shitty new version, find me the 70s classic!').

Our Italian IT volunteer, who spoke no Polish, ended up bookmarking the movie stream on all the laptops. When we were closing up at the end of the session we'd check for snoring sounds, just to be sure he wasn't locked in anywhere.

When I found out Fox had died I cried and his friends told me off. They said he knew what he was doing.

The doctors had told him what would happen if he didn't stop drinking, and he didn't stop. I wonder if this talk is a sort of defence mechanism, a way of saying 'this won't happen to me', and thereby regaining a sense of control over one's own life? Or maybe the idea that Fox

wanted to go feels easier to digest than saying that alcohol and his material situation killed him. I never dared to ask them.

He'd been in a coma because his organs had given up, that's all they'd been able to find out. It's hard to get information if you're not next of kin. We were standing at the entrance to the social centre when they told me all this, and then I went and joined the volunteer meeting.

The other volunteers were sad that Fox had died but most of them didn't know which one he was. This happens a lot. People ask to see a photo of the person, but we mostly have blurry group ones, you can't really see who's who. The one person who knew exactly who he was was the IT volunteer.

The Polish church held a memorial for Fox, too. The priest preached a sermon about not coveting your neighbour's goods...

Every so often I meet up with his friends and we laugh about his grumpy ways. I still miss him, so it's nice to share memories with other people who remember what he was like.

Wojtek/ Victor

17th January
2020



Picture acknowledgement: Anna K

Wojtek volunteered at Akwaaba and a few other charities, he used to carry the lunch tables downstairs before sessions and take them up again at the end. He used to be a heroin user, but he'd been clean for about four years. In the time I knew him he struggled with alcohol.

We're from the same town, and we used to compare notes on the dogs we'd left back in Poland. Once when he was telling me about his mum I realised she'd worked in the same place as mine. It's a food processing company, they make meat products from poultry. Just after the new year in 2020 he came to me asking for help. He wanted to stop drinking, he felt like his body was giving up. This was twelve days before he died.

The next day we went to see his GP, and they referred him to the surgical A&E team with suspected pancreatitis. The doctor told Wojtek he shouldn't stop drinking "cold turkey" because it was too dangerous. While we were waiting for the referral, he went to the corner shop to get a can of lager (the nurse said it was OK).

He didn't want to go to North Mids: the rough sleepers I know call it 'the slaughterhouse', and he'd been turned away a few days earlier. But it was the only option on the table, so we went, and I waited with him for a bit before going back to work.

He called me in the afternoon to say he was being discharged and didn't know why. He put a member of hospital staff on the phone and I asked her about the suspected pancreatitis the GP had mentioned. She said: 'There's nothing wrong with him, he just doesn't fancy sleeping on the streets'.

I spoke to him on the phone a few times after that, I was trying to help him find some residential rehab. The last time we spoke was on 15th January, his fortieth birthday. He was staying in a night shelter and he was still in a lot of pain.

Two days later I got a call to say he'd died. I remember I was in the PILC office and I cried. Later I spoke to my mum on the phone and she said she remembered W's mum. She'd worked in the accounts department but was retired now. The two of them used to go out for cigarette breaks together...

The Catholic church held a Polish sermon in Wojtek's memory. We taped some tributes from his friends and sent the recording to his mum.

I think it was a source of solace for her: maybe his life hadn't been perfect, but he was loved and missed by his community in London as by his family in Poland.



She asked me to go to the inquest on her behalf, and to see if I could get any of his property back. I went to the police station first, but they didn't have much: just a piece of used tissue, his glasses and a lighter. The police said there'd been nothing else at the night shelter, but when I called the shelter manager he said that wasn't true. Wojtek's backpack was sitting in their office waiting to be picked up.

The backpack had his medication in it, along with some vitamins and painkillers. Apart from that there was some shampoo, shower gel, deodorant. A bottle of Gatorade and a few moulding sandwiches... I took the perishables out and sent the rest to his mum with a label with W's name on it.

I'm still friends with her on Facebook, she sends me Christmas wishes...



Stanislaw (Stan / Stasiu)

October
2020



I'd been supporting Stasiu since 2017. His life was full of ups and downs, & the drinking and being homeless didn't help. Some days I'd ask how things were going and he'd say 'great' and crack a smile. Other days he'd break down crying. He was an incredibly gentle soul...

He was working on and off for some dodgy employers who knew about his alcohol issues. Sometimes he'd get £20 a day, sometimes £20 a week. He taught me the phrase 'Chujowo ale bojowo' ('Things are fucked but we don't give up' ... it's funnier in Polish because it rhymes).

When he wasn't doing well, he'd drink a lot and get really sad. In those moments we'd talk about him getting help. The problem was he didn't really believe there was any help out

there for him. Legally speaking he had a point—without a qualifying right to reside, he couldn't get benefits or social housing.

There were periods when he'd stop drinking for weeks at a time. Then he didn't think he needed any help. Things were finally looking up for him, just you wait...

A couple of times he had an epileptic seizure at the social centre. Once we called the ambulance and when the paramedics arrived they recognised him straightaway. They said they got calls about him several times a week. But they still asked for his name and date of birth as if it were the first time, because they didn't have anything on record. Every time he went to hospital it was like starting again, as another 'unknown'...

How are you supposed to get proper care if services don't even know your name?

Stasiu hated hospitals. He'd walk out, or 'self-discharge' as the NHS likes to call it. Being there reminded him of the time he'd been admitted to a psychiatric ward after a suicide attempt, it felt like being locked up again.

In early 2020 he'd started seeing a volunteer counsellor. An hour a week was nowhere near enough but it was better than nothing. But then the pandemic started, and he was put up in a hotel nearly an hour away from Haringey, the part of London he was used to.

This sort of thing happened a lot in the early months of Covid-19—homeless people with 'high support needs' being uprooted from formal and informal support networks, including drug and mental health treatment, friends and support workers.

My PILC clients were spread out in hotels across London. I spent most of March and April 2020 coordinating support by telephone and email, including the delivery of food parcels from mutual aid groups. In the rush to accommodate everyone some councils hadn't made provision

for the basics, like renewing methadone scripts or making sure people had food to eat.

When I called to check on Stasiu he said he'd been made to wait in the reception for five hours before being allocated a room. It was 36 hours since he'd last eaten. I remember ordering him a pizza and worrying he wouldn't find the delivery guy. But he managed.

Living in a room by himself with nothing to do was really bad for him. Homeless 'guests' in Covid-19 hotels didn't have access to WiFi or TV or the other things you normally expect in a hotel. They were left alone with their thoughts.

I was worried about him, so I'd call now and then and ask his friends to check in on him. Sometimes they'd all be in one room having a drink, sometimes Stasiu would be in his room on his own, crying.

He told me he was going mad and having suicidal thoughts. He was in touch with his counsellor over the phone, but had to stop speaking to her in the end because he found it difficult to keep to the boundaries they'd set. Sometimes he'd call me and we'd stay on the phone for an hour or more. That probably wasn't healthy but I didn't know what else to do. Sometimes I didn't have the energy to pick up the phone when he called.

He was still having fits. Once he had one while we were on the phone and I got really worried. Another time he called me when he was having an asthma attack and couldn't breathe. I emailed my contact at the council and told them what was going on. Eventually they transferred him back to Haringey to a place where reception was staffed 24/7.

At the new place he seemed to be doing better, at least for a while. I met with him and an outreach worker, we talked about his needs and made an action plan. But she had forty Stasius on her plate and I don't think she ever had the time to follow up.

I'd been supporting him to apply for settled status. I was so proud when he brought me a folder full of crumpled bank statements, old payslips, unsorted bills – this residue of his more organised years meant we could submit a strong application for him. We went together to the

Polish consulate to get him a new passport, he hadn't had an ID for years. It was a nice sunny day, we took the bus...

We were so happy when he was granted settled status! Recourse to public funds at last! (I was a bit worried about him getting Universal Credit, that he might just drink it away and harm himself. But I was excited that he'd now be eligible for proper housing support.)

The next time I saw him things weren't going that well. He'd been moved to another hotel, he said they treated Eastern European rough sleepers 'like dogs' there. The staff were overworked and had no time for anyone. They also had no training in how to navigate the complexities of EU citizens' eligibility for support. 'Come back next week' was the mantra – or so my Polish clients joked.

In the six months Stasiu was there they didn't so much as open a bank account for him. My emails to the workers supporting him, and to the local authority about his status, went unanswered.

I was waiting with somebody else for a GP appointment when I found out Stasiu had died. He'd had another fit and a haemorrhage in his brain. I cried and cried and had to take the rest of the day off.

The hospital had me down as next of kin and the staff member who'd called me with the news was a bit surprised:

'Oh, so you must have been quite close then?'

I felt angry – she wasn't wrong, but what sort of life is it when your next of kin is your caseworker? Were we close? He sent me a friend request on Facebook once. I tried to explain politely that I couldn't accept it, that I preferred to keep things separate. After he'd passed, I saw that the request was still outstanding. I added him so I could see photos of him.

I found out later that the charity that had been supporting him still had him down as having pre-settled status at the time he died. As far as they'd been able to work out, and despite my attempts to tell them otherwise, he had no right to reside that would qualify him for welfare assistance.

Mariusz

*June
2021*



On the day I started to write this account I'd been to visit Mariusz in hospital, and now I have had to add him to the list.

PILC was representing him in a civil claim case for compensation, he'd been detained by the Home Office at a time when they had a policy saying that EU homeless people could be deported just for sleeping rough. The policy was ruled unlawful after a PILC legal challenge, Mariusz had been one of the key claimants.

He had a deep voice—in another life he could have been a radio actor. I did his pre-settled status for him, and we agreed we'd meet again in December 2020, at which point he'd be eligible for settled status. Without settled status, he wasn't eligible for benefits or housing support. In the meantime he'd been looking for work in construction, but the offers dried up once the pandemic started.

We didn't get to meet in the December because Mariusz wasn't well, but we rescheduled for the new year. I was looking forward to congratulating him on his civil claim — he'd been awarded £25,000 in compensation.

On the day we were supposed to meet I waited for him at PILC's office but he didn't show up. He called me later to say he'd fainted on the way to see me. He'd ended up in hospital, where he was later diagnosed with cancer.

At the point of discharge, it was clear Mariusz wasn't well enough to go back to the hostel he'd been staying in. But the hospital didn't want to look for housing for him because they'd deemed him ineligible. We referred him to a housing solicitor to challenge this.

Meanwhile I visited him a couple of times. The first time he told me which ward and bed he was in, but I still walked straight past him. He'd lost so much weight and I didn't recognize him. But I recognised his voice when he called out to me.

The last time I saw him he gave me a soft toy and some perfume to say thank you for the help. He must have asked a friend to buy it for him. We were still trying to persuade hospital social services that he needed to be discharged to supported housing.

In the end he never left hospital. The money from his civil claim paid for a funeral and a family plot back in Poland — for Mariusz and his mother.

About PILC:

The Public Interest Law Centre (PILC) exists to challenge systemic injustice through legal representation, strategic litigation, research and legal education. We hold government and public bodies to account, challenging unlawful policies and practices.

PILC is funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Oak Foundation to monitor and defend the rights of homeless EU citizens after Brexit, and to advance a critical, rights-based approach to support for this group.

www.pilc.org.uk

