



Five Wise Steps case studies

YS:

I started working with YS since July 2019 after she had received her Refugee status. YS was referred to ICOS through FODI, she had good English language skills but struggled sometimes with confidence when using English language. During the start of the programme YS was not sure about what she wanted to do, if she wanted to carry on studying or going into employment. But she had very high aspirations from the beginning of joining the programme.

During the programme YS has received a lot of various support including help with writing a CV and covering letter, accessing volunteering opportunities and accessing education and training. During her journey, YS has completed Entry Level Award in independent living, Level 1 in Employability Skills and a Level 2 Certificate in Preparing to Work in Adult Social Care.

Overall, YS said that this journey has been very difficult for her but her English language skills, knowledge of access to services, digital skills and confidence have greatly improved since she has been receiving support from ICOS and joined the Wise Steps Programme.

Even though she has experienced some difficulties along her journey, YS has felt motivated to continue with her education online and has started volunteering for British Heart Foundation in a charity shop. In September 2020 YS went back to Sunderland college to study her final year of pre-access to higher education and she has also found part-time employment working for Sunderland University as a Domestic Assistant. YS continues to improve her skills, experience and knowledge, she is a very highly motivated individual who is now applying to study psychology at University from 2021.

Andres:

Andres has found out about wise steps through a friend and contacted ICOS asking if we would be able to help him find relevant courses and employment. Andres originally comes from Colombia and his English language skills are very good but he does not have a formal qualification in English. He has finished Travel and Tourism

degree in his home country and he really wanted to continue with his education but his qualification is not recognised in the UK, unfortunately Andres was not eligible for support from the Job Centre due to his immigration status and could not take part in any funded courses but through wise steps he was able to get the right support and motivation.

We have supported Andres with updating his CV and registering with job searching websites and agencies, I have helped him with multiple job applications within the hospitality, retail and customer service sector. During this time Andres was successfully invited to multiple interviews including a kitchen porter, hotel event host and multiple customer service roles at call centres but unfortunately those have been unsuccessful. In February 2020, Andres has completed an online Level 2 Food Hygiene course which would improve his opportunities of getting a job within the hospitality sector and he had also been granted indefinite leave to remain.

Overall, Andres is very happy with the support he has received from Wise Steps and ICOS, his confidence has improved a lot and his next step will be looking for courses and training so he could continue with improving his employment opportunities and continuing with job applications, he is also very motivated to learn to drive.

Robert:

Robert is originally from Poland and has been long term unemployed due to health problems. Robert been referred to ICOS on the Wise Steps Programme through the job centre, Robert felt that he was not getting any support from the JCP and he needed to re-fresh his training.

After attending his initial appointment, he felt a lot more positive and motivated, Robert was accepted on Wise Steps in February 2020. He had no major problems with his English but he felt that his confidence has been quite low due to the problems he was experiencing with employment and health but he was very motivated to re-fresh his qualification for a CSCS badge, with support from his coach Robert has finally managed to complete his course, he feels that the support he has received from Wise Steps Programme has been excellent and whenever he has a problem or is struggling with something he knows he can turn to ICOS for help.

Karolina:

Since I lost my job I have been struggling with problems such as lack of employment as well as acces to information about benefits and entitlements. I also needed UK qualifications and wanted to progress into further education but I did not know any organisations which could help me. Coming to ICOS for help was a good call, I have strted my journey on Wise Steps in November 2019.

I recieved support in many areas of life including education, money matters, job searching and made new friends. I wanted to pay back for the support and advice I had received, so in January 2020, I started volunteering for ICOS. I found charity work very motivating and doing something useful helped me to feel better about myself. While helping with clerical tasks, I'm constantly improving my IT and English

skills. As socialising has never been my strength, meeting new people and involving myself in events, meetings and courses gave me a lot of self-confidence and joy.

I'm glad to be a part of this amazing team and looking forward to learning even more new things.

Tania:

Tania's story: Julia is a Senior Project worker for the Wise Steps project funded by the Lottery fund. Julia places great importance on ensuring we place inclusion and equality at the heart of everything we do at ICOS. Her role within the project is to help and support BME individuals living in Sunderland. She has helped and supported Tania (not her real name) who is originally from Angola overcome barriers. Tania was encountering difficulties gaining recognition for her qualifications gained in Angola. She was in a low paid job. She eventually left her job as a cleaner and suffered a mental breakdown. When she heard about ICOS at first she was hesitant. She decided to ring the ICOS office and book an appointment. Julia assisted her with writing a CV. Register with recruitment agencies, filling job applications. She has also encouraged Tania to register with job searching websites. Julia has also attended appointments at the job centre regarding applying for Universal Credit, with her for extra support. As Tania was suffering from mental health issues, Julia referred her to an organisation which offered free counselling services. Every two weeks Tania attends Wellbeing events which Julia facilitates. These sessions have been of great help as they have boosted Tania's self-esteem and confidence. With Julia's help she has enrolled on a book keeping course at Sunderland College. If Tania did not understand something Julia would patiently repeat it, summarise main points discussed in the meetings. She used positive body language and was aware of Tania's background and culture, which helped foster trust.

Tania feels optimistic about the future and when interviewed about her experiences regarding the service she received she replied: "I thank Julia for displaying compassion and commitment. She treated me with great respect and dignity. The first time I rang ICOS, I admit I was nervous. As soon as I entered the office, I knew I had made the right decision. She always asked if I was okay with the steps I was taking. Julia was polite, friendly and approachable. She actively listened and answered all my questions. Took an interest in me as an individual and valued me as a person and respected my beliefs. She celebrated my differences in a positive way. Everyone in the office was helpful. I have spoken to my friends. I told them to go and seek help from ICOS."