



**ICOS**



**COMMUNITY  
FUND**

# BACK IN CONTROL

External Evaluation – Final Report

International Community Organisation of Sunderland

14 Foyle Street, Sunderland, SR1 1LE

Chris Ford, August 2022

This document is the final report of the external evaluation of Back in Control (BiC). It builds on the interim report completed in October 2020, and updated in June 2021. BiC is a three year project of ICOS (International Community Organisation of Sunderland) funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. Thanks to them and the BiC team for their support with and input to this report.

The aims of BiC have been summarised as “to support victims of modern day slavery, domestic violence and discrimination. Ensuring that the people who suffer from exploitation will have an increasing role in driving this project and become resilient and regain control of their lives” (Project Powerpoint, September 2019).

The project might best be considered a pilot in that while responding to existing needs identified by ICOS it was a new focus for the organisation that required considerable internal learning and development.

Delivery of the project, including meeting agreed targets, has been significantly affected by Covid.

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## External Evaluation – Final Report

### 1. Participants and impact

#### 1.1 Client Profile

Of the 87 people about whom information is recorded (up to 10 May 2022), it was stated that:

- 51 female, 35 male, 1 no answer.
- 66 people that they were ‘any other white background’; 15 that they were African; 5 ‘white gypsy or Irish traveller’; and 1 that they were ‘any other Black/African/Caribbean background’.
- 74 that they were Christian; 10 no religion; 3 Muslim.
- 17 that they had caring responsibilities.
- 1 person was disabled.
- All heterosexual.

Monitoring information was not gathered for an additional 3 people that the project worked with.

A separate analysis of all the registration forms identifies:

#### Age

18 – 24	7
25 – 34	20
35 – 44	37
45 – 54	11
55 – 64	9
65 +	2
No information	4
Total	90

#### Location

Sunderland	41
Rest of Tyne & Wear	29
County Durham	6
Darlington	2
No information	12
Total	90

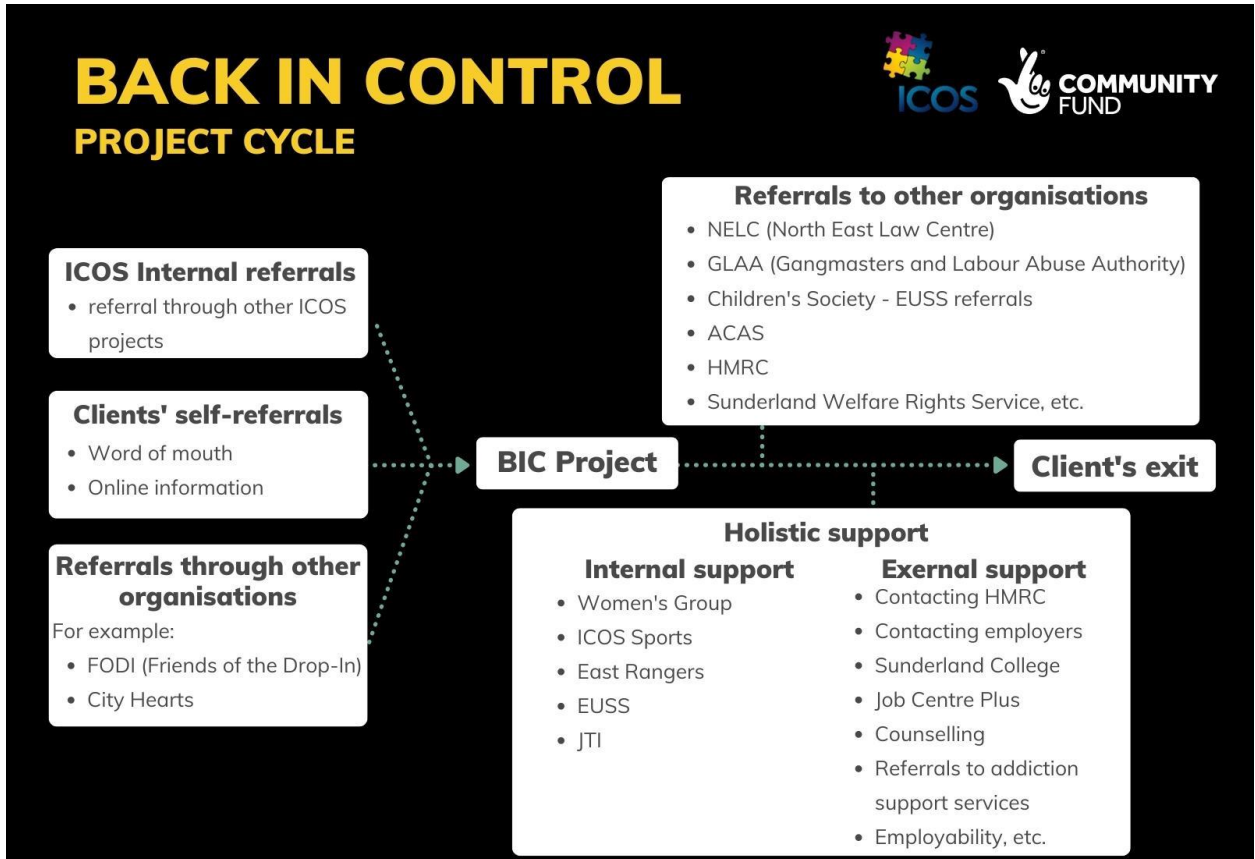


Figure 1: Back in Control - Project Cycle

## 1.2 Impact

The project has worked with 40 survivors of modern day slavery and 49 of lesser forms of exploitation. This information has not been recorded for one person.

Having received additional funding, BiC is continuing to support clients. The following information has been generated by the project, on the data available from clients who had left the project before 10 May 2022.

### Back In Control - Exit Participants Analysis

Financial Situation	SUM	%
Improved	54	68%
Decreased	6	8%
Same	7	9%
N/A	12	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100%</b>

Control of life	SUM	%
Improved	44	56%
Decreased	7	9%
Same	2	3%
N/A	26	33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Health

During the project ICOS introduced the use of the 14 item Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale. Because of its late introduction and the use of different versions of project registration and exit forms, there are two points of data for a total of 19 people, some of whom did not answer all the questions.

While analysis indicates a generally positive change over the period in which these people were in contact with the project, any statistical conclusions would not be robust. Further the question of attribution would be unanswered.

### 1.3 Training

A separate strand of BiC was the delivery of awareness raising training. Following a single organisation pilot with 15 participants, it was reported that between July 2020 and September 2021, 153 people from 24 organisations took part in 20 training sessions.

Of these organisations 17 were voluntary and community sector (including one trade union), the others being statutory. Fourteen focused on Sunderland or a part of the city; 7 had a wider scope but included the city while 4 served other locations.

Following initial support, the evaluation of the training was undertaken by the worker. Two reports have been produced and are available on request from ICOS.

## 2. Additional Evidence

Appendix 3 includes 14 case studies and 11 case summaries that illustrate the work undertaken by BiC.

In discussing this, one worker observed that for some people 'there's no outcome'. Naming one person she stated 'his partner still comes, but he has just disappeared'. Her work 'has helped him survive in the meantime, but he has not made any progress. And his partner still comes, although she's missed 10 appointments in a row now.... Helping people maintain their existing lives is important. Some people's lives are so chaotic, with the issues being interconnected that its sometimes necessary to support people and slow things down so we can work out how best to approach. It can be a particular issue when there is limited trust and when people are undocumented.'

### 2.1 User survey, mid 2021

Plans to develop mechanisms for client input into service design were thwarted by lock down. To gather some insights, during June – July 2021 BiC workers surveyed by phone all current clients, successfully engaging with 13 people. Full findings are included in the appendices.

The following were recorded as most important support needs:

- Accessing diverse support and statutory systems x 12
- Food x 7
- English language/translation/interpreting x5
- Finding a job/new job x4

Two suggestions for improvements were made:

- More frequent updates on the progress of a case/Frequent and regular contact with the customer.
- More funding for food vouchers and clothing.

Participants were also asked what type of support they are likely to need within the next two years.

Reflecting on the research it was reported: “out of respect we didn’t ask [about empowerment] directly but it came through the conversations – something some people are not used to, did not expect this. People are not used to being asked for their views.”

## 2.2 Key Partners

Four interviews were undertaken with key partners during February/March 2022 (see appendix 4 for further detail). This group included those relationship established through BiC as well as longer standing ones.

Observations, summarised below, include both aspects that have worked well and areas for possible improvement.

- There’s a good rapport between the services; we get relevant referrals...There’s mutual support between the organisations and good communication... There’s a very definite need for ICOS. They provide assistance for local residents where they can. Often English is not the first language. It’s about interpreting the words, but also about cultural sensitivities, and giving confidence to the individual.
- The first direct referral was relevant and appropriate.
- ICOS as a team are very good to work with.
- They have a very good multi-cultural team, good gender balance. They are very willing and open. The staff are good to network with.
- They seem to have a turnover of staff, perhaps because on short term contracts.
- There’s a lot to learn with RAS [refugees and asylum seekers], and people are learning on the job. There are gaps in knowledge and experience about RAS. They have very different experiences and needs compared with other groups...
- It’s very difficult to know what counts as success and this won’t be the same for the refugee as for ICOS.
- There aren’t many Asian communities involved with ICOS. We have big Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities in Sunderland.... They may be working with the Asian and African communities but they are underrepresented on the website...
- With Eastern Europeans it is more of a migrant worker situation so there’s not the same community backing you when you have difficulties [compared to more established Asian communities]. ICOS is a life raft in these situations. They are working on this by being there: they are a bastion for building confidence.
- We need to pick up the relationship now we are ‘living with covid’.
- Sometimes could do with a faster turn around; it would be useful for ICOS to consider developing a prioritization process.

- Don't get much feedback from ICOS... do not expect updates about individuals but it would be good to get an overview of numbers and key issues.

## 2.3 Interviews with BiC staff

During 2022 a set of semi structured interviews were conducted with four BiC workers.

### Clients

- It makes a big difference, it can change lives if people want to do it.
- Exploitation at work can be a 'gate way issue' – there are other things going on for people.
- Some people will not achieve full independence... [story of individual's homelessness, mental health issues and alcohol problems.] Can BiC help him take the steps necessary?
- Have 6 or 7 clients at the moment, they need help all the time. I have a couple in the second group - but most are already sorted.
- Sometimes think its just knowing someone is there to support them.
- Think sometimes people don't understand what is happening – one person thinks the Halifax [Building Society] are paying for his rent.
- Still sometimes people don't trust me if things don't turn out how people want. I cannot be responsible for the outcomes... Some perceived experiences of discrimination are on basis of lack of understanding of system.
- Possible risk of dependency. Clients don't want to learn English– as they know can come to [ICOS worker].
- People do not know about their rights and if they do then assume does not apply to them... The community is so used to being exploited.
- Many clients are exploited by their own or extended family members or other people in the community. Exploitation seen as normal. This adds a further layer of complexity. They do not want to report it to the police. [ICOS worker] has reported to manager issues about safeguarding. Some people not want others to be told they are getting support from BiC.
- Sometimes they come to ICOS, and not recognize themselves as being exploited.
- Often clients have problems with reading and writing.
- Help with entitlements and accessing UC, housing, GPs, JC+.
- With some work needed to mitigate what they were doing to selves or others or system.
- In some cases we have perhaps prevented further abuse and exploitation.
- During the pandemic significant mitigation for clients.
- Know people have problems with alcohol, have unstructured lives with multiple problems. Have worked with people like this in the past. But if have a significant number it affects the balance and affects people coming to ICOS for other reasons, other projects.

### Employees

- Get well supported by team in ICOS when I'm not sure what I'm doing.
- Practice has grown over time. Perhaps there needed to be the pilot work within BiC before able to produce standard guidelines.
- Sometimes I worry too much about clients problems.

- I am sometimes not certain what can and cannot say. ... Last week he phoned my crying. He used to phone at 2am, but I had work phone off. I worry about him, I don't think he knows how serious his situation is.
- Want to be more engaged with clients; but at the beginning was way too engaged – providing an immediate response to their needs. I had to establish boundaries.
- Lots of on the job learning.
- There are some differences in expectation within the worker team.
- Internal issues – staff turnover (wages are restrained by grants) ; much greater impact than expected. Its difficult to pick up work with individuals, even with contact logs. some clients have particular relationship with the specific worker.
- People know employees before they are employed at ICOS. People in the community know each other; so limited in what we can do. False information about a family member of a member of staff was posted but it was outside of work. Not enough to exclude the client. Moved the worker away from working with this client; relationship became sour. This has required lots of management time. This is a new experience for ICOS.

### **Organisational**

- It's hard to divide the projects [within ICOS], as people come with all sorts of issues.
- It would have been useful to know what else is going on within ICOS.
- Agencies working around housing, health and welfare rights are key relationships for BiC clients.
- Was a pressure to get in contact with clients all the time, but I know that if they want anything they will come to me... [I] had to work out own balance.
- Recruitment – have used social media etc but most clients come from the community by word of mouth.
- Recruitment.... There was lots of pressure. Not explicit monthly targets, as a number, but we knew we needed to show to the funder that we were meeting the numbers in the bid. The best approach to recruitment is word of mouth... but most of the people we help are very isolated, so they don't know many people that they may refer on.
- Issue about challenging behavior of some clients; where to put the boundaries. Had someone shouting and throwing paper work around the office. Staff cannot be frightened at work.
- It's a different size of organisation – partially because of BIC. So have had to be more organised, developing staff teams.
- Evaluation; especially use of monitoring data. From aug, sept will be using Lamplight – better for processing data. This has taken a lot of time.
- Volunteering; not within BiC but we are progressing on this more broadly. Need a full volunteering plan. Volunteers in womens group have come through BiC ; the issue is about how to offer a holistic experience to clients. Separate question about where to claim the outcome, avoiding double funding.
- Learning about social media, external comms in general. We are getting better at this.

## **2.4 Short-term interventions case review**

While cataloguing the project records covering the period between 1 September 2020 and 1 May 2021 it was noticed that a significant number of people had both registered and exited BiC during this 9 month period. A detailed review of the records relating to these 17 individuals revealed that 9 of the cases had related to employment issues consequent to covid or the furlough scheme. (See case summaries 8 – 11 for illustrative examples.) The vast majority of the work had been delivered



remotely, with the rationale for face to face meetings not always being obvious, although it might relate to people’s access to the internet.

Sunderland	4
Rest of Tyne & Wear	9
County Durham	1
No information	3
TOTAL	17

## 2.5 ‘Next Steps’ research

In addition to the evaluation work, during early 2021 a small piece of research was undertaken reviewing the broader context of BiC in terms of work around Modern Day Slavery within Sunderland, the local labour market following Covid, and the impact of Brexit especially the time limited EU Settlement Scheme. See appendix 1 for participants. Some elements of the work secured little engagement.

This is particularly true of the first element – local work on MDS – which might be interpreted as highlighting the importance of ICOS continuing to raise the issues at a policy level in parallel with direct provision. This is underlined by the findings of an online survey undertaken between March and June 2021, including that 36% of 127 Eastern European women living in Tyne and Wear reported discrimination by employers and/or at work. This was the most prevalent form of discrimination reported. (Harvey-Golding, et al (2021) ‘I’ve been asked to return to my home country’. University of Sunderland)

During the past 3 years the Liberty Partnership, a regional network of which ICOS is a part, has been established and there have been important national developments in practice. Links to some of the most relevant resources, which could usefully inform future provision by ICOS, are included in the appendices.

In spite of some valuable contributions concerning the local labour market, data of sufficient detail to inform an assessment of the likely position of BiC’s client group was not identified. It seems probable that this data does not exist. If relevant an alternative approach to informing proactive work could be to identify the industries where current ICOS clients work.

The impact of Brexit, specifically on Sunderland residents who were born in Eastern Europe, has been a background feature throughout BiC. The early impacts of this were identified around people’s access to housing, health, benefits, higher education student finance, social workers and employability support. No direct links were identified in the BiC project records, however, one worker stated:

“There’s a feeling of hostility. It’s mental as well as practical. Also amongst people who have been here for many years, people are asking ‘What will it be like in a year? Will we be really alienated?’ ... It’s different being a foreigner. You know you’re in a different country. People are already going back because they cannot stand that pressure. There’s an unsettled feeling.”

### 3. Summary

Project targets; outcomes and numbers		Reported delivery
Total participants.	140	90
Accessing better employment.	20	17
People feeling in control of their lives.	90	44
People report being in a better financial position.	70	54
Local organisations are better equipped to recognise exploitation and slavery.	30	26
New volunteers recruited.	20	4

The following summary aims to draw on the work to date and inform the next phase of BiC delivery. The project, which built on ICOS's experience, addresses very diverse needs. From a review of all the registration forms where the presenting issues are recorded, there seems to be 4 different strands of work:

1. Generic, wide ranging, sometimes intensive support for survivors of Modern Day Slavery.
2. Short term specific support, sometimes employment related for survivors of Modern Day Slavery.
3. A specific employment concern, generally either exploitation, (such as unpaid wages, sick or holiday pay) or discrimination (such as differential treatment and bullying).
4. Broader employability support, which is sometimes linked with the above.

While further issues and needs are often identified as relationships develop, this broad categorisation of work seems relevant in developing responses. So far as has been identified through this research, BiC has worked almost exclusively with the first two types of survivors of MDS identified in the Home Office's typography (see appendix 1).

High quality responses to such a wide range of sometimes complex needs requires the project to have and/or have access to diverse and specialist competence, knowledge and skills. Project-wide approaches, such as trauma-informed working, need to be complemented by detailed knowledge around particular communities, such as the specific and very particular issues faced by Asylum Seekers, particular systems applicable more widely, such as in-work benefits and particular needs, such as substance misuse and mental health.

The introduction of Customer Relationship Management software will support the continuing internal alignment across ICOS projects, which has been a valuable aspect of support provided to some BiC clients. This might also contribute to ensuring an appropriate consistency of provision.

On-going employee training support and development is likely to be complemented by external relationships. In addition to the service focused priorities that have been identified, and in some cases developed and/or enhanced through the project work to date, developing a further range of policy-orientated relationships may be valuable. A strategy of using robust evidence drawn from high quality provision to develop clear policy orientated materials may in the future prove valuable in ensuring ongoing support for BiCs valuable work.

## 4. Appendix

### Appendix 1: Methods, participants and sources

The evaluation has used a mixed methods approach. The quantitative data produced by ICOS has been complemented by more qualitative methods such as key informant interviews (see below) and reviews of project records including to develop case summaries.

There is clear evidence of organisational learning and evolving practice around monitoring and evaluation, both within and beyond the scope of BiC. For the latter see particularly 'ICOS Progress and Outcomes Report May 2020 – May 2021'. The internal learning appears to have built largely on the work of the interim review which included a review of the evolving practice. Future steps are identifiable. Although proportionality is always important, there is space for continuous improvement. The CRM system could provide a useful tool in this regard.

#### Research Participants

##### Interviews with ICOS workers:

2020 (interim report)

- Alessia Maria Di Meo
- Aurea Neto
- **Michal Chantkowski**
- **Monika Panufnik**

2022

- Anna Bury-Dobrowolska
- Aurea Neto
- **Michaela Lenkendorferova**
- **Michal Chantkowski**
- Julia Wysocka, Community Development Worker and Wise Steps Coach

##### Input to 'Next steps' research

- Amer Ratkusic, Childrens Society
- Eddie Smith, Economic Analyst, NELEP
- **Julia Wysocka, ICOS**
- Michael Fawole, NELC
- **Michaela Lenkendorferova, ICOS**
- **Michal Chantkowski, ICOS**
- Mike Coombes, CURDS
- Mohamed Nasreldin, NERS
- **Monika Panufnik, ICOS**
- Nasrin Ahmadi, JET

##### Key partner interviews

- Frank Ferguson, Employment Specialist, Welfare Rights Service, Sunderland Council
- Samia Gillani, English & ESOL lecturer, Sunderland College

- Sandra Watt, Manager, FODI (Friends of the Drop in for Asylum Seekers and Refugees)
- Steven Knight, Investigating Officer/Labour Abuse Prevention Officer GLAA (Gangmasters & Labour Abuse Authority)

Four agencies declined to participate; in one case this seems to be because they were unaware that they worked with people referred by BiC; in another the relevant interviewee was off sick and then living with long covid; the third's behavior was very defensive; with the final interviewee referring the request to a colleague who did not know of BiCs work, so could not have provided relevant input.

### Key sources

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/modern-slavery-awareness-booklet> See page 8 and 9 for 'the typography of 17 types of Modern Slavery Offences in the UK'
  - 1 Victims exploited for multiple purposes in isolated environments Victims who are often highly vulnerable are exploited for labour in multiple ways in isolated rural locations. Victims live on offenders' property in squalid conditions, are subject to repeated abuse and are very rarely paid.
  - 2 Victims work for offenders Victims are forced to work directly for offenders in businesses or sites that they own or control (some offenders may be gangmasters). The main method of exploitation is not paying or illegally underpaying victims.
- The Trauma-Informed Code of Conduct for All Professionals Working With Survivors of Trafficking and Slavery (Rachel Witkin and Dr. Katy Robjant, 2018). "a professional guide for best-practice when working with survivors" <https://www.helenbamber.org/resources/best-practiseguidelines/trauma-informed-code-conduct-ticc>
- The Slavery and Trafficking Survivor Care Standards (Kate Roberts, 2018) <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599abfb4e6f2e19ff048494f/t/5bcf492f104c7ba53609aeb0/1540311355442/HTF+Care+Standards+%5BSpreads%5D+2.pdf>
- Hope for the future: Support for survivors of trafficking after the National Referral Mechanism UK integration pilot (Alexandra Williams-Woods, 2021) [https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/humanitiesampsocialsciences/documents/Independent\\_Review\\_of\\_the\\_Hope\\_for\\_Justice\\_IMSA\\_Model\\_\(University\\_of\\_Liverpool,,\\_June\\_2021\),\(1\).pdf](https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/media/livacuk/humanitiesampsocialsciences/documents/Independent_Review_of_the_Hope_for_Justice_IMSA_Model_(University_of_Liverpool,,_June_2021),(1).pdf)
- Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre. [www.modernslaverypec.org](http://www.modernslaverypec.org)
- Modern Slavery Core Outcome Set <https://www.mscos.co.uk/>

## **Appendix 2: Phone survey of users, July 2021 undertaken by BiC workers**

What support do they need most at the moment?/ What support do they need?

- Food and clothing for family.
- Food and support with finding a job.
- Support securing a new job and help with food and paying bills.
- Support securing a new job, access to education, interpreting and also translating services.
- Food, clothing and toys for children.
- Currently help with recovering Tax Credits and translation of documents between the customer and Tax Credits Office. Also, Liaising between the customer and HMRC.

- Help with recovering unpaid sick pay and also interpreting support.
- Translation and interpreting between the customer and the Social Services. Help with every-day issues with an aim to reintegrate the customer back into daily life.
- Help with PIP claim. Help with translation and interpreting of important documents. Help with English language.
- Help and support with addiction. Help with looking for a job. Help with English language. Translation and interpreting.
- Emergency food parcels, electricity top ups and help updating UC, help with EUSS status (still awaiting decision)
- Emergency food parcels, help with accommodation, help to get ID, help with EUSS status (still awaiting decision)
- Emergency food parcels, electricity top ups and help with UC application

**What type of support are they likely to need within the next two years?**

- Help with housing and securing employment if Home office grants leave to remain.
- Day to day duties such as reading letters, disputing cases, help with paying bills and getting access to information.
- Getting access to information.
- Getting access to information, interpreting, translating, help with benefits (if needed) Food vouchers.
- Getting access to information, finding work, housing services.
- I don't anticipate the customer will still need support then.
- I don't anticipate the customer will still need help from us in this area.
- Translation, interpreting, help with every-day issues which aim at reintegrating the customer back into a normal daily life.
- Probably the same as above. Help with fully reintegrating back into a so called "normal life". Help with improving English skills and becoming more independent.
- Probably the same as above. Help with fully reintegrating back into a so called "normal life". Help with improving English skills and becoming more independent. Help with getting better English language skills.
- To get a job, apply for PIP, help to get ID
- To get a job and accommodation
- Client said they would need help with everything because they don't speak English - long term support, PIP application

**Do they have any advice on how we can improve the project, even if it is small?**

- More frequent updates on the progress of a case.
- Frequent and regular contact with the customer.
- ICOS is an amazing charity, the only think I can think of in term of improvement is to get more funding for food vouchers and clothing in order to help more people going through hardship.
- No – client just said they were thankful for our support and that appreciate us not being racist and treating them well
- Not at the moment, I'm very happy to find this charity.
- No.
- No.
- No.
- Nothing he could think of as he has been registered recently.

- The customer did not have any ideas.
  - The customer did not have any ideas.
  - No – client could not think of anything
- No – client could not think of anything

### **Appendix 3: Case studies and summaries**

The case studies below have been produced by BiC workers drawing on their direct experience, with some input from the evaluator. The shorter case summaries are produced from a review of project records, supplement by interviews with the workers. They have been chosen to illustrate collectively the range of people and issues addressed through BiC. Some of this material is reproduced from the interim report.

#### **Case Studies**

1) In September 2019, Farouk (not his real name, originally from Sudan, he was a victim of modern slavery when en-route to the UK) came to our office in Sunderland because he wanted help in applying for Universal Credit (UC). He was referred to ICOS by Friends of the Drop In for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (FODI).

When he visited our office he was unemployed, not receiving any benefits and was struggling financially. ICOS helped him complete his Universal Credit application and arranged an identity check appointment, as well as supported Farouk with setting up the initial appointment and habitual residence test for UC. ICOS assisted him with alternative accommodation (as he had to leave his Home Office- provided accommodation).

A few weeks later, he approached ICOS again as he wanted to apply for a flat with Gentoo (a local housing association). However, after a while and after discussing his options with his project worker he stated, he decided did not want to rent a flat with Gentoo, because the minimum contract length was nine months as he did not plan to stay in Sunderland for that long. Various housing organisations were contacted by ICOS, in order to help him with accommodation.

In October 2019, he received help in searching on the internet for plumbing and warehouse jobs on indeed.com and applying for plumbing and forklift driving courses at Sunderland College. In November 2019, Farouk received help in writing a CV and also with his application for NARIC (<https://www.naric.org.uk/naric/>) to have his vocational (plumbing) qualifications recognised in the UK. ICOS covered the NARIC certification fee, as the client was on a very low income. He also received help in enrolling on a Level 2 Food Hygiene course, as he needed the qualification in order to apply for a job. The fee for this course was also met by ICOS. In December 2019, his project worker helped Farouk with the Food Hygiene course, as he was struggling with passing the course due to English language issues. He finally passed the course on his fourth attempt and a certificate has been issued for him, so that he could submit it to potential employers. ICOS emailed him a list of various training providers, contacted some of them and were told that the majority of courses were now being run on an in-house basis; hence it was more difficult to access training without being employed.

ICOS also supported Farouk with his general school leaving certificate equivalence, which included arranging and paying for translation from Arabic to English. In January 2020, his application to NARIC was submitted online and Farouk received the statement of comparability of qualifications. He was planning to leave Sunderland by the end of the month and exited the project. Farouk was now able to start working in a food processing factory (having a level 2 food hygiene qualification was helpful in that respect). He has now moved to another city but he feels ICOS' support has been very beneficial to him, as has been able to enter the labour market.

2) Eva (not her real name, originally from Poland) access the *Back in Control* project because her employer did not pay her holiday entitlement.

Eva's story began in September 2019, as she was experiencing problems with her supervisor, she mentioned that the attitude of her supervisor towards her was very negative, which included making unfounded allegations about her ability to perform in the workplace. Eva had also completed a course and had not been issued with a certificate from her employer. This qualification was needed when applying for jobs and Eva was keen to change her job in the near future. Her project worker helped Eva in creating a CV, which could be used for applying to work in a care home as a support worker. In October 2019, she received help in contacting a potential employer, which was actively recruiting at that time.

When Eva was interviewed in November, she stated that she worked as a cleaner at a local leisure business, as well as a nursery assistant at a factory (which provided childcare for their staff during half term and holiday time). She began the interview by saying, "my supervisor [at the cleaning job] is bullying me. It all started when my colleague and I did not come to work, our bus did not come and we only work a couple of hours a day. I am a cleaner. It would have been pointless to get the next bus as I would have not made it in time, and I would have got to work for the end of my shift. My supervisor, she began shouting at me. She said did not believe me. She started calling me names. After that I complained about it to our manager, my supervisor was instantly informed about my complaint. That is when it started every time I was at work, she would shout at me, call me names, and make my life at work more difficult. It was impossible to work with her. She would talk about me to other people and say very disrespectful things. I complained to my manager about the situation. They said they would do something about it, but she has not done anything. One day she came down to visit. I think she is based in Manchester. She just comes once a month to visit us. We had a little chat. So, I was pushed to go to in an empty room with her. She basically explained to me that everything would be fine from now on; we have got to move on from this part. She called the supervisor into the room. She said from now on we have got to get on, do you agree? I said yes, the supervisor said yes. That was basically it. She left and bullying did not stop. Nothing really changed. I did not want to go there in the room by myself. I wanted to have someone in the room with me. The manager replied that it was not necessary, because we just have a chat. After that I came to ICOS, Monika, the project worker for the *Back in Control* project, helped write a complaint to somebody higher up in the company and about my supervisor, as well as about how the manager had treated me. There is also one more thing, as soon I complained my supervisor knew about it and she sent me messages on work group chat, saying 'oh, Eva thank you for that', and I asked her what you mean? And she replied: 'you know what I mean'. This was instantly after I complained. There are other people who are getting bullied and I have tried speaking to my managers. I was told I was not allowed to speak about other people's problems. I have really no idea because nobody really cares in that place. We are not allowed to talk about it. We have been specifically told that we are not



allowed to talk about work issues and we are not allowed to speak to them about it after work and at work. People do not speak to me. It is important for people to have some good listening skills, empathy, have the ability to talk to a person. I came for help because I did not know what to do. Julia (the senior project worker) helped me write a complaint and the bullying was reduced, this bullying happened in the past.

On my time sheet, my supervisor wrote different hours from the hours that I actually worked, so I would lose hours. She would put weird notes, for example saying 'Eva had left one hour earlier and someone else had to do the job again for her'. Someone had to redo my job. After confronting her about the notes on the timesheets, some sort of explanation. So, it ended like nothing ever happened. She would not give me holidays even if I asked her months before. Even if I asked for a one-day holiday, she would ask why I needed that certain day off. I gave her one month's notice for one day because I wanted a Saturday off and she started complaining that I could not have a Saturday off. I am also the only one that has to request holiday's in writing. Nobody else does. Everybody else just comes and asks. There should be the same rules for everyone. If I have to request holidays in writing I have no issues, it is not right when it is only me that has to do this. I do not mind her writing notes about me on the timesheet as long as they are the truth as this would help other people. People should be non-judgemental. The most terrible thing is that I have to go to work otherwise I will lose it. Fear of losing my job, having no money. This is constantly on my mind."

In November 2019, Eva's project worker discussed with her the way forward, because Eva had been informed by her college that was unable to attend a Level 3 Childcare course due to her level of attendance as she had been off sick. She received help with updating her CV and help regarding contacting a care work agency to find out about part time posts, discussed with her long term priorities and helped her in sending the correspondence with the care agency. Her project worker checked if there had been any progress with the job / any job offers. In January 2020, she was given advice regarding job searching and interview preparation. Discussing with her the financial situation and benefits eligibility as (the client could not claim universal credit if she was in full time education, which she was about to start unless she decided not to start at this point, as part time courses were only available from September).

At this point Eva was dismissed from work. Her project worker calculated the holiday entitlement due. She received help in: updating her jobsite profile on Indeed as this would improve her employability, ensuring her profile; skills and experience are relevant, writing a letter to the former employer to ask for the refund of her holiday pay, advice on applying for jobs as this was important as it would improve her employability and financial situation. Therefore, Eva was encouraged to write a letter, which she did with our help. In February 2020, Eva received help and support regarding interview preparation for an apprenticeship. A follow up meeting was held with Eva regarding progress, job searching and to find out if she needed any more help. Another meeting was held where her employment situation and benefits were discussed. A final reminder was sent to her former employer stating if holiday pay was not paid in full within 7 days, there would be an application to HMRC with regards to non-payment of minimum wage. As a result, she was finally paid the outstanding holiday pay.

When asked what support would you like from us in achieving your targets? She said: "Taking care of formalities relating to Universal Credit, checking messages in my journal, before I am able to do it myself. Signing me up for courses, which have been an interest of mine. Support with dealing with



the harassment in the workplace.” When asked how she felt about the help and support she has received Eva said: “I am happy with the help and support I received, all matters are dealt with positively. I am grateful for the help received so far.” I’m happy because Michal had helped me with my interview, I felt empowered and prepared to undertake work. I have applied for jobs, attended job interviews and had regular visits to the office to review my situation. ICOS has helped prepare for interviews and helped by reimbursing the travel costs in order to attend interviews and travel to search for work”. Eva has been able to get another job with ICOS’ help and she now works at a care home.

3) Margaret (not her real name, originally from Poland) came to our office in December 2019, Margaret had been exploited at work, as her employer was refusing to pay holiday pay for the period when she had been on maternity leave. ICOS helped her to contact the employer, asking them to pay her outstanding holiday pay accrued during maternity leave. ICOS’s help was crucial, as Margaret spoke limited English. Subsequently, Margaret also asked for help in applying for Child Tax Credit, as her financial situation was difficult. She was advised to bring all relevant documentation which stated her actual income, as she did not have these documents on her, another appointment was scheduled the following week.

ICOS also provided support in finding children’s centre sessions, to which she could attend with her 8-month old child. She returned to ICOS, as she required help in trying to open a gov.co.uk account; however her project worker was unable to proceed further as she couldn’t remember her total pay for 2018-2019. Once this information was provided by Margaret, ICOS was able to open her personal tax account and make a claim for Working Tax Credit. In January 2020, she received help in contacting her Human Resources Manager regarding her unpaid holiday pay. She was willing to return to work, however she stated that she wanted to use her unused holiday. Her employer was contacted requesting the possibility of using 82 hours of unpaid holiday which she had remaining. Her employer did not reply with a decision whether she would be authorised to do so or not, as she replied stating that she was waiting for an email from the regional manager, the project worker rang Margaret, as she we wanted to clarify the issue related to her annual holiday accrued during her maternity leave. With ICOS’s help, Margaret was successful in resolving her issues with the employer and she was able to receive her holiday entitlement in full.

After five months of receiving help from ICOS, in May 2020 she was interviewed as she was exiting the programme and was asked the following questions by her project worker: “Do you feel you received adequate support as a client? What would you suggest needs to be improved to make the experience better for other clients in the future? Have you received adequate support as a client?” To which Margaret replied: I asked ICOS to help me recover outstanding holiday pay accrued during maternity leave. ICOS have also helped me make a claim Child Tax Credit. My project worker was always there and I could always count on her. She helped me resolved issues with my employer before going back to work after maternity. I am very pleased with all the guidance and information I received from ICOS staff. I feel good knowing that there is always someone to talk to if you need help with personal or professional matters. It gives me a sense of security thereby it has a positive impact on people’s mental wellbeing as they don’t feel left out or lonely.’

4) Two employees, who have fallen victim to modern slavery, came to us in September 2019 in order to receive advice and support relating to their case. Bruno and Julius (names have been changed, they were originally from Poland but lived in the UK before going to work in Scandinavia). They have

given us an account of what happened after a recruitment agency offered them demolition work (they were to demolish an old factory site) located in a Scandinavian country. This had taken place in February 2019.

They were initially offered £9.30 per hour for their work and were reassured they would receive a refund of the cost of arrival and payment for the time counted from the moment of arrival in Scandinavia. Upon arrival, it turned out that Bruno and Julius had to sleep in a van because no accommodation was arranged for them at that time. After two nights of sleeping in a van, Bruno and Julius went to their designated workplace, namely the demolition site. After the first payment of their wages, it turned out that the hourly rate was changed from £9.30 to £8.30 without any acknowledgment from the employers or explanation of this difference.

After the sixth day of work, one of the demolition workers took Bruno and Julius to a nearby forest and left them there to their own devices informing them that from then on they had to cope alone and that they could not go back to work. They were told that the motel room where Bruno and Julius stayed after two days of sleeping in the van was allegedly damaged by Bruno and Julius and that the employer (the recruitment agency) had to cover the costs resulting from the losses, which the owner of the motel estimated at 3000 Euros.

They only had a few euros in cash and their belongings were left in the motel to which they no longer had access to.

They could not immediately return to the UK, because they didn't have the right amount of money for plane tickets, therefore they were forced to sleep on the streets for nearly 14 days. They eventually returned to the United Kingdom using money borrowed from friends and family and their own passports, which they had on them before being ejected from their workplace.

The situation relating to the alleged damage to the motel room was used by the recruitment agency as an argument not to pay Bruno and Julius the money owed for six days of work (12 hours a day). Additionally, both only received £8.30 and not £9.30 per hour for the three days they were paid for. Hence, in total, they were underpaid by £741.6 each.

The case worker discussed what action they would like us to take with the clients and what support they needed. They decided that they would like to write a letter to the employer, in order to ask for reimbursement, but were unsure how to do it and had difficulties using formal English. Therefore, on behalf of Bruno and Julius, we sent a grievance letter to the recruitment agency, with a list of claims arising out of verbal arrangements concluded between the employees and the agency.

With our help, Bruno and Julius received the outstanding money for 6 days' of work, reimbursement for flights and the difference of £1 of their hourly rate and the time counted from their arrival in the country. At this point in time, the two workers were asked if they would like to contact the GLAA (the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority), but they declined, as they were preparing to leave the UK. We also contacted the authorities in the Scandinavian country to report the case and enable for further investigation. As an organisation, we believe that this type of modern exploitation, bordering on modern slavery, is becoming increasingly common and therefore requires urgent action.

5) Robert (not his real name, is originally from Somalia) in September 2020 contacted ICOS and an initial registration was made through the phone. Robert stated he needed some assistance with a work related issue. He had found employment working in a restaurant and had purchased a black uniform. His friend had advised him; his employer would refund him for the cost of his new black uniform. When he approached his employer he refused to refund him. This left Robert short of money as he did not have recourse to any savings for food. Therefore, Robert was advised that it would be beneficial if a face-to-face appointment was made at his home address in order for Aurea, a Back in Control project worker to discuss in with him in depth his work related issues. This meeting was arranged promptly, the day after Robert had completed his initial registration. When Aurea met Robert, there was a language barrier as he does not speak English and she overcame this by using Google Translator to improve the discussion.

Aurea helped Robert apply for the Red Rose Fund; a cash grant which gives people the support they need during the coronavirus pandemic as Robert had not been paid his first wage. He also stated he required the money not just for food but also money for transport. Aurea and Robert met his employer at the restaurant where he was employed. Aurea asked why Robert had not been reimbursed. His employer clearly stated that he had never informed Robert that he would refund him for his uniform and that he would get his money back. Robert's friend who does not work with him advised him with the wrong information that employers in UK pay for staffs' clothes. His employer advised that the company gives out the black t-shirt with the logo on it to waitresses (the main room staff) and other staff from the kitchen can wear all black trousers or leggings and a white shirt (without logo) which comes from their own expense as its not seen as uniform, its rather seen as dress code.

The requirement was for all staff in the restaurant to wear all black as he does not provide a uniform for his staff. However, the employer did offer to pay Robert's wages in advance. After this clarification, a couple of weeks later Aurea contacted Robert and asked him if he would like help in finding another job. Robert declined the offer as he is happy in his current role.

6) Tom has turned to ICOS for support with issues at work in August 2020. Tom is originally from Poland and has worked for the same employer for over 5 years.

The issue accrued when Tom has returned to work after his holiday abroad, his employer asked him to return home because other employees were concerned over COVID19 virus. The client has followed all guidance given by the government and did not require to self-isolate on his return from holiday according to COVID19 guidance and has shown proof required to his employer to confirm this.

His employer argued with him that he is not allowed to come into work but the client was concerned over loss of income for the next two weeks, Tom was not showing any symptoms of COVID and was unable to claim SSP, the employer told him that his time off work will be unpaid.

The client and the project worker rang up ACAS for information and advice to find out if its lawful for his employer to decide this. ACAS had advised that if there is no 'temporary layoff clause' in his contract, it is not lawful for the employer to do this. After our conversation with ACAS we had carefully checked the clients contract, which did not indicate that the employer was allowed to temporary layoff Tom.

We have written a grievance letter explaining the issue, we had stated in the grievance that Tom would like to either come back to work or would like to get full pay for the 2 weeks of absence due to losing out on his wages for 2 weeks of absence as their decision to temporary layoff Tom was unlawful.

The next day, Tom's employer had contacted him to resolve the issue and had agreed to pay the client full pay for the two weeks of temporary layoff period.

The client was very pleased with the outcome due to the support from Back in Control project. Due to the support received, Tom's income was not impacted by the decision of his employer.

'It's important to tell stories like mine so that others know what to do in this kind of situation' – Tom

7) Our client, Martha, who lives in Sunderland, approached us because of problems with her employer. She used to work as a cleaner. Currently - the former employer – did treat her in an unfair and disrespectful manner, telling her to work much more than other employees, but within the same number of hours. In addition, he would ignore her, did not answer her phone calls and did not reply to her e-mails. He would humiliate her in front of other employees, which clearly is something unacceptable. He only called her when he wanted something from her, but otherwise he would never answer the phone. Her former employer did not care about providing Martha with decent working conditions and he would even tell her to use toilets intended for hotel guests and did not provide her with a microwave or a kettle so that she could have her break and have something to eat or drink. The client started to feel depressed and even one of the hotel guests said he would write a letter to her employer informing him about how she was treated as he had witnessed it himself on a few occasions.

Due to depression, the client went on sick leave, and then we stepped in. We wrote a letter to the employer asking him to respond to all of the above-mentioned allegations and to redress the damage between the client and the employer, informing about our intentions to take legal actions in connection with the situation if Martha did not hear anything back and appropriate steps were not taken. We wrote to the client's employer and after a week the client received a response stating that he was waiting for our client's proposal to resolve the matter. The client did not want to return to work, so they parted ways by mutual agreement and the employer paid her the redundancy pay. After a week Martha received her redundancy payment together with a P-45. As an organisation, also helped the client to apply for the JSA, which she received within a month of submitting the claim form. Martha was very happy with the result of the case and we were also satisfied with the turns of these events.

8) Oliver is originally from Slovakia. Prior to contacting ICOS, he is a victim of modern slavery. When he was rescued, he agreed to enter the NRM- and was referred to ICOS by another charity for long-term support. The issue arose because documents regarding applying for the EU Settlement scheme for himself and family had been lost by the Home Office. ICOS stepped in and have helped him deal with many problems. Firstly, his project support worker offered to contact their partner organisation which had sent the documents to the Home Office. ICOS also contacted the partner agency in order, to find out if they needed any help to communicate with Oliver and ensure they checked the progress of the application and new documentation. ICOS also arranged another appointment with Oliver to discuss any updates and tried contacting the Home Office on his behalf. An appointment

with EUSS / Children's Society to secure immigration status for EU citizens. He received help with updating his CV. ICOS helped and supported Oliver to contact the internet provider to stop cutting of internet, as he was unable to pay for the internet due to being on low income. ICOS, contacted Oliver, to check if he had access to internet and if he needed any support. His project support worker also checked the universal credit requirements and discussed them with him (as they were currently suspended due to the epidemic). Contacted Oliver, to check if he had access to internet and if he needed any support. Updated CV and Covering letter for the Oliver. His project support worker also arranged a meeting time to support him with a tax refund. Contacted Gentoo regarding disrepair- there was a leak on Oliver's roof, because he had one small and one young child at home. Contacted DWP to change hid phone number. Sent a list of job websites to the Oliver. Updated his Universal Credit account to ensure DWP were aware Oliver, was now in work. Contacted a debt management company to help Oliver pay off the debt, as he did not speak enough English to do it on his own. Contacted Sunderland City Council regarding council tax bill (which appears to have been increased).

ICOS helped to translate for Oliver, to ensure that he understood the changes to the council tax bill (it was due to Oliver, starting work) technically, the bill remained the same, but the council tax discount was removed due to Oliver, being in work. Refunds for travel tickets, supporting him in accessing English class, a debt with a mobile network provider and a letter to the social landlord to highlight flat conditions (his home is cold). Helped him with paying council tax over the phone. Supported him by ringing gentoo on his behalf and report a repair (dripping drainpipe and entrance door) (gentoo line was already closed. Called gentoo and reported a repair - arranged an appointment. Lastly, we checked if his council tax payment went through. Set up a direct debit to pay for his Council Tax. Moving forward, Oliver stated he would be interested in English classes, but only if they are face to face. He finds it difficult to learn online.

9) Morgan is an asylum seeker, originally from Nigeria. The issue arose when he was advised by his church pastor to ring ICOS for support regarding issues with his landlord. Morgan was in debt he had fallen behind with his rent; he was forced to work for his landlord for free. "I owed the landlord a couple of month's rent and every day he threatened to throw me out of my rented accommodation." Morgan was deeply traumatised and scared when recalling the threats, he faced. According to Morgan "the Senior Project worker at ICOS, contacted me immediately, she rang Migrant help as to be honest I did not know what an asylum seeker was. ICOS advised me to present myself at The Home Office. I did not know anything about the indefinite leave to remain status that is needed in order, to stay in the United Kingdom." We contacted Morgan to find out the help he required, and the Senior Project worker advised Morgan that they would help him complete a letter that needed to be sent to the Home Office. In the letter we clarified that Morgan did not know that he could seek asylum until it was suggested by his Senior Project worker. We also helped Morgan with help to apply for furniture through Sunderland Council and were advised that he did not qualify because Morgan did not have a National Insurance number and was not receiving benefits. We kept him up-to-date and informed him that we had asked different charities shops to find out if they had any furniture they could donate. We carried out extensive research and advised Morgan he would be able to buy furniture and food for the upcoming months through the Red Rose Hardship fund. Morgan also stated, "I needed food for myself and my family, it was a very difficult time for me and my family." Therefore, we contacted the Citizens Advice Bureau who issued Morgan with food vouchers in order, for him to get food from the local food bank. We asked Morgan if there was

anything else, he currently needed. Morgan stated, "I could only apply for the Red Rose Hardship Fund only once, I have a family to feed." He also added "I was issued with an Aldi orange voucher worth £50 and a phone mobile top up. Morgan stated he was very happy to receive the food vouchers from Aldi because "the food vouchers and food parcels rather than accept the food from a food bank, gave him more choices, for himself and his family." He also added "It gave some dignity back to me." Morgan also added that "he was feeling positive about the future and that "he made the right decision in contacting ICOS, in the future, I hope to find a job which will enable me to provide for my children." We advised him to keep in contact with ICOS. We also contacted Morgan on frequent occasions for updates on how the final interview with the Home office was progressing. The Home Office wanted to know the reason why he was claiming asylum, now the home office will send their answers to the solicitor and the solicitor will review, sign and send back, his lawyer says he has a strong case Morgan stated, "I feel more positive now because my lawyer has given the evidence of everything that I am claiming. I feel more at home since coming to ICOS, the organisation has helped me a lot. I am grateful for the help I have received. Coming to ICOS has had a positive impact on my life. I feel as if I have got my confidence back, this would not have been possible without the help and support I received from ICOS."

10) Lina and Tony are originally from Slovakia, they were both victims of modern day slavery. They were taken to work in a field along with Lina's son who is mentally disabled. The issue arose when Lina and Tony contacted ICOS because they needed help and support from Sunderland City Council. ICOS also contacted Adult Social Services. Lina and Tony's project support worker then complete the Adults Needs Assessment with a view to seek help and support from the council. Adult Social Services contacted ICOS again to ask for more details and to arrange a home visit. ICOS also contacted Adult Social Services but could not reach the person she needed to speak to. Arranged and appointment with Lina at the Job Centre regarding Universal Credit. Helped Lina apply with pre-settled status. Lina and Tony received pre-settled status. Her Project worker printed it out for her and tried to call the Home Office regarding her partners and Lina son's European Settlement Status, however, the line was busy. ICOS contacted Sunderland City Council twice to arrange an appointment for Lina and to ask some questions regarding her Universal Credit, however, the council refused to speak to Lina's project worker, and they said they need to use their interpreter. While waiting for the interpreter, the phone disconnected. Her project worker contacted the council on her behalf in order, to receive an emergency mobile phone top up and food parcel. In the first instance, the council refused. However, ICOS contacted the council again and there was no issue with receiving a top-up and food parcel. ICOS arranged a home visit with Adult Social Care Services. Adult Social Services, said there was no help they could provide, however they were concerned about Lina's financial situation and stated they would refer Lina to other organisations who may be able to help. They also informed ICOS, that they would be able to provide regular food parcels for Lina and her family. Lina and Tony also contacted ICOS because she received a call and assumed it was the council calling her regarding her food parcel. As Lina could not understand what was being discussed on the phone. ICOS stepped in and called the council and they stated that they had not made the call and contacted Adult Social Services, who did not reply. ICOS also helped Lina top up her mobile phone as she had received a voucher and did not know how to receive it. Lina contacted ICOS that she had been awarded Universal Credit. Lina's project support worker, Contacted Sunderland food bank to receive a food parcel for client and arranged an appointment with a client for a call with Groundwork. An appointment was arranged with Lina and she received 2x £49 fuel vouchers (they are only eligible for 3 vouchers per year; however, since they have 2 different



providers, they could not split their voucher. The voucher Lina has is eligible for 1 more voucher this year. Fiscus contacted ICOS and Lina because they needed an interpreter. Lina went to ask for a food parcel; they received one but were told that it is the last one they would receive from them. ICOS contacted Sunderland Soup Kitchen to ask if the client could get some free meals. The council contacted ICOS and after discussing the Lina's situation they decided to contact the Sunderland City Council to ask if they could provide more help to the client. The council got back in contact and stated that Lina was receiving support from the food bank. ICOS has also contacted GLAA (the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority) on behalf of the clients and facilitated a meeting between them and the GLAA to further investigate exploitation. ICOS is currently liaising with Sunderland City Council's Adult Services department to support the family and their son.

11) A client from Washington came to our office as he was seeking help in relation to his situation at work. In September last year, he was absent from work because of food poisoning. After that he went on his holidays, which had already been booked. He started his holiday on the 17th of September but he left on the 16th as it was a Sunday anyway and he would not have been working on Sunday anyway. While being on vacation he did not receive his wages the following week. He called his manager to find out what the problem was and he found out that his holiday was cancelled because apparently, they thought he had had Covid-19, where in fact he was off due to a simple food poisoning. The company did not even inform the client about their suppositions and about the non-payment of his holiday. After returning to the UK, the client called the office to sort this issue out but it turned out that no one was willing to talk to him and explain things further. In addition, he was told that he wouldn't be paid for his time off (including the quarantine) because he was coming back to the UK through France, even though France was only a transit country and passengers travelling through France then did not have to quarantine. The customer was told he can't be put on furlough either, so consequently he was left with no money and had to apply for and overdraft as he had his bills to pay. This had a detrimental impact on his overall financial and family situation and has caused a lot of tension at home. We issued a letter to the employer asking for clarification of the facts described above and in response to our letter the customer was asked to join a grievance procedure meeting during which I acted as an interpreter.

The grievance procedure took place via zoom and the case was eventually resolved to the advantage of our client. We explained it that first of all the client had already had his holiday booked and approved by his manager. His holiday was booked in advance and we explained it to the employer that they could not cancel a period of annual leave if it means that the employee is not able to take his full statutory annual leave entitlement in that leave year, which was clearly the case in this instance. We also explained it to the employer that if they cancel a period of his annual leave without a clear business reason and this results in the suffering financial loss, the employer could face a claim for constructive dismissal. The client also explained it to the employer that he had gone to see his GP when he was unwell and was diagnosed with food poisoning rather than coronavirus therefore this argument was overthrown straight away. As a result of our mutual work with the client, he was brought back to work, got full holiday pay and was only issued with a warning to inform the company prior to any holidays being planned about the destination of his holidays (due to the current pandemic situation) even though France was only a transit country then and there was no law in place which stated that the client had to stay in quarantine after crossing the French border. We concluded this case successfully.

12 ) Paula is originally from Poland. She came to England in 2018 and she was hoping to find good employment. She approached International Community Organisation of Sunderland because she had problem with her former employer. She has not received her last pay; she is owed 113 pounds by the employer. She has received her P-45 but not her wage. Our project worker has been trying to contact Paula's former employer. He sent an email to him, but the employer had given an incorrect email address. The project worker called him and explained the situation. Our client has not heard anything from her employer, so they contacted the manager of the client's former employer. He informed that somebody would be in touch within the next 7 working days. They didn't hear anything back after a week, therefore our worker sent an email to the manager demanding urgent action on this. The client and the project worker rang up ACAS to get some information and advice in order to find out what to do in case of an employer did not want to reply to calls and messages. ACAS advised that in the first instance, they recommended the employee discussing the concerns with the employer verbally. They also said that if speaking to the employer was not resolving the issue, Paula may wish to raise a formal grievance. After the ACAS advise, our project worker had contacted client's employer again over the phone and he agreed to pay her last pay.

Paula was very pleased with the outcome due to the support from Back in Control project. She said: "It was a pleasure to be helped by ICOS, very helpful stuff that are always available to help and support."

At the minute she is a full-time-mum for her 6 months old baby, but in the future she would like to get back to work and she would like to find a better job.

13 ) Patricia is originally from Poland. She came to England in 2015 and she was hoping to find good employment. She approached International Community Organisation of Sunderland because she had problem at work. Her colleague's behaviours left her feel uncomfortable. Our project worker advised her to talk with employer or someone senior at work as soon as possible to try and resolve the problem. Patricia reported it at work, but they didn't resolve the issue. That's why project worker advised her that she need to bring forward grievance proceedings regarding sexual harassment at work. He helped her with contacting her employer, they wrote a statement and submitted with the employer. While she was waiting for response from her employer regarding sexual harassment, she had accident at work; she slipped on the fruit and fell on the floor. Patricia was unconscious for a while, but nobody called an ambulance. After the accident Patricia couldn't go back to work, because she had accident related health problem. Our worker helped her contact solicitor, because her employer didn't take any future action regarding the accident. From then on solicitor was supporting Patricia regarding her problems at work.

When she was on a sick leave, her income has significantly reduced. She was struggling financially that's why ICOS project worked help her with Universal Credit claim. They also applied for Council Tax Reduction, and Personal Independent Payment. Patricia also had a numbers of outstanding debts, so our project worker helped her to contact debt charity which offer free, flexible debt advice. They set up personal action plan and choose debts solution. It gave her a little bit breathing space in her difficult situation.

At the minute Patricia is still on a sick leave, because of her health condition. She is hoping that she will be better soon, and she will be looking for work. She still receives help from ICOS when she needs to be in touch with Universal Credit, council, or her GP.



Patricia she is very happy about support which she is receiving from Back in control project. She said: "I would be lost without ICOS and my support worker!"

14) Agnieszka is originally from Poland. She is a victim of a modern slavery and was referred to ICOS by another organisation for a long-term support. ICOS have helped her to deal with many problems.

Firstly, her project worker was helping her with the accommodation. They register her on a Gentoo website. Together they been looking for a house and they been applying for it. After a while she received a house offer and she accepted it. ICOS helped her with all the paper work and her project worker contacted Sunderland City Council about help with furniture and cooker.

Next ICOS worker helped her with finding employment. He offered help with creating CV and applying for a job. She applied for a few jobs. They went together to a hotel in Sunderland to hand in Agnieszka's CV.

They also needed sorting out issues relating to Leave to Remain Card which has been expired. To help Agnieszka with Settlement Status, our project worker referred her to other organisation which was supporting her in that case.

Because she was struggling financially, ICOS help her to apply for Universal Credit. After a while, the application was accepted and the client started to receive Universal Credit payments. Project worker was arranging food parcels, phone top-up and food vouchers for her.

Fortunately, the perpetrators of her slavery were arrested and the case has now come to an end.

Agnieszka said: "ICOS was very supporting and helpful. I don't think I can go through really bad times without them. Now I'm in different place then I was couple years ago".

### **Case Summaries**

1) A 61 year old unemployed man who is living with the consequences of MDS. He was held captive in the Midlands for 3 or 4 years and 'paid' solely in alcohol. A one point during his enslavement he was stabbed and ended up in a coma in hospital, from where he was kidnapped.

Throughout the project, BiC has provided extensive and at times intensive holistic support of both a personal and practical nature. A particular focus has been on providing translation and advocacy to enable access to Universal Credit, Criminal Injury Compensation, NHS physical and mental health provision and navigating the EU Settlement Scheme.

2) A 29 year old, employed woman who approached BiC in July 2019 for help in writing a grievance letter. "I worked for three days through an agency- I was on a training but I was physically unable to carry out the employment tasks as I was not strong enough. The employer refuses to pay for these 3 days." The agency did not respond to the letter BiC had supported her to write and in September she decided that she did not want to pursue the matter due to other priorities.

3) BiC started working with this 59 year old man in July 2019 when his application for Universal Credit was rejected. He was already in contact with ICOS having come to Sunderland in 2015 when relocated following his experience of slavery. Through BiC he has received ongoing and at times both extensive and intensive support including during the death of his partner.

In addition to the direct work this has involved liaison, referral, advocacy and translation with Social Services, Care provider, GP, A&E, Physiotherapy, Occupational therapy, Psychological Wellbeing Service, Welfare Rights Service, CAB, DWP, Home Office, Solicitor, Landlord (including organising physical adaptation), Cleaning companies, Gas, Electric, Northumbria Water, TV, Bank, Mobility Scooter Company, Grant Making Trust, Church, Age Concern, Fire Service.

4) From July 2019, a 37 year old woman was helped by BiC to address the constant administrative errors around her statutory sick pay. She was on the sick having damaged her arm. This was exacerbated by her work at the hotel, with a new manager unwilling to make adjustments. The reduction in income led to her falling into housing arrears, so BiC helped negotiate an arrangement with her land lord. BiC also worked with the police to remove her violently abuse partner from her flat, who was wanted on a European arrest warrant.

5) A 36 year old man contacted BiC in August 2019 having lost his job being owed unpaid hours of work, holiday pay, and redundancy pay. The ex-employer did not respond to the initial approaches so, with the projects support including translation, he accessed the Council's Welfare Rights Service. Following their intervention, he received an email from his previous employer instructing him to make an insolvency claim through HMRC website which he successfully did with support from BiC.

6) A 38 year old woman who works on a production line came to BiC in September 2019 "with regards to being harassed and bullied by my team leader. She mocks my accent, checks how much time I spend in the toilet, as well as disregarding my health issues, as well not allowing me to go to GP and health appointments." Working with the GMB, BiC supported this person through a formal grievance process. She chose not to appeal when the claim was dismissed.

7) Throughout 2020, BiC worked with 22 year old who had survived modern day slavery. As a result of his experience he had no identity documents, which required contact with a city council in Slovakia to get a copy of his birth certificate and then the Embassy in the UK to get his identity papers. Parallel work with HMRC was necessary to get a National Insurance number, which was needed to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme, and the GLAA about a possible prosecution. Throughout this time BiC also helped secure hardship funding and vouchers to cover food and fuel.

*The following were developed to illustrate the 'brief interventions' which seemed to be a particular feature of BiC provision during lockdown.*

8) In September 2020 a couple from North Shields in their 30s approached ICOS because their employer wanted to reduce their hours of work from 30 hours a week to 20. A request to be placed on furlough instead of accepting the new hours was rejected by their employer who at the same time had calculated their outstanding holiday payments on the basis of 20 rather than 30 hours. Having confirmed details with ACAS, ICOS supported the couple to initiate a grievance procedure concerning the holiday pay and interpreted at the on-line meeting. This resolved the issue with full entitlements being paid. A few weeks later the employer proposed that if the couple accepted a new contract for the reduced hours they would then be furloughed, coming back to work at the reduced hours. Rather than agree to these terms the couple sought redundancy which they accepted receiving full redundancy pay.

9) In early 2021, a 29-year-old woman living in Newcastle was supported to find employment. Her zero-hours contract had ended as a result of the pandemic and as a single parent she was

facing acute financial difficulties. ICOS helped her to access the Red Rose Fund, a project of the British Red Cross, which provided a pre-paid cash card. ICOS also forwarded weekly lists of job opportunities identified through on-line recruitment sites, which led to her securing a temporary contract with Public Health England providing Covid 19 advice by phone.

10) In late January 2021, a Gateshead couple in their 30s who worked for a local packing company contacted ICOS. Their employer wanted them to take 14 days unpaid leave as another employee had tested positive for Covid 19. Both people took a test which was negative. They contacted their employer saying that they could not afford to take the time off and they want to be working. Their employer agreed to this requiring them to sign a document stating that they had not been in contact with anybody who had Covid.

11) In March 2021, ICOS supported three people working at a County Durham based packing company. The payroll manager at the recruitment agency had calculated the annual holiday payments at approximately half the contracted entitlement for each employee. Although the manager was resistant to engaging with ICOS, the employees received their full entitlement within 5 days.