



## Case study - MK

ICOS was able to help out a 21-year-old, single mother from a Polish background. She has been long term unemployed and has been highly motivated to find a part time job. However, she needed more support with access to services and employment opportunities. While living in the UK she has experienced many issues such as being a victim of domestic violence and had no family here to support her through this difficult time. She was staying in temporary accommodation for young mothers and had received some support from a social worker but she needed more support from services in her own language. She turned to ICOS for support as she needed help with finding part time work and finding long term stable accommodation.

She was accepted onto the Wise Steps programme (employability project) in August 2017 and provided with support with job searching, including techniques and information where and how to look for work. She received help to create a covering letter and to update her CV. This was not easy as foreign qualifications were not compared to UK equivalents and therefore were not appealing to UK employers. Additionally, support to register with job searching websites was provided. We also provided holistic support, including liaising with the council regarding her housing benefit, which helped to stabilise her situation. This support increased her confidence and improved her chances of finding work and in December 2017 she found employment at a local hotel.

In November 2017, ICOS started being supported through the Healthy Steps (a project focusing on connecting people to services and improving wellbeing within the BME Black and Minority Ethnic community). Our outreach worker has helped MK to complete an online food hygiene course so that she could improve her future employment opportunities as well as English language skills. With our help, she gained a level 2 certificate in food hygiene. We have also signed her up for the E-learning lounge hub (run by Sunderland City Council) so she could complete some interesting free online courses in her own time.

In December 2018, she set up another appointment with us, she was very grateful for our support because she found a weekend job as a housekeeper in a hotel in Sunderland. However, she did not know if she was able to get the prescription exemption certificate. Our outreach worker had a one-to-one session with the individual and explained that she will have to complete a low-income scheme form for help with prescription charges, they have spent some time together filling out the low income scheme form, she needed some help with it as she could not understand the questions herself, she didn't know such form existed and she was very grateful for the information and support we have provided.

The individual asked us for help again in January because she lived in an accommodation for young single mothers, which was not supposed to be long-term and she wanted to find her own flat in Sunderland. I explained to her that she would be able to get a council flat for her and her son and would be able to receive housing benefit as well as she only worked part time. She then booked an appointment with us and our outreach worker helped her with filling out an online Gento (social housing) application on homehunt. The individual now feels confident in applying for flats and houses from Gento herself.

The individual has been very pleased with the support received from ICOS, as it improved her knowledge of access to services, wellbeing services, employment opportunities and her lifestyle. It has also improved her English language skills, relationships with others and confidence.