



1. The ICOS Women's group provides community development opportunities for the women involved. One of our women's group volunteers had come up with an idea to deliver her own activities for the group, 'the mum's club'. She took part in training she needed to be able to deliver these activities including safeguarding and first aid. She was able to recruit mothers from the Eastern European community to volunteer for the project and help her to deliver sessions and activities for mothers and their children. She also managed to involve a sponsor (a local food shop) who agreed to donate refreshments and food for every meeting. The volunteers worked really hard over the last year to deliver various activities focusing on improving mothers and their children wellbeing whilst providing a safe and inclusive environment for everyone to meet. The sessions they have delivered included a Stadium of Light tour, a visit at Sunderland Maritime Heritage (volunteer-led local history and heritage organisation), a Halloween and Easter Party for children and meet ups at local community venues which included activities such as arts and crafts, cupcake decorating and games. The volunteers from the ICOS Women project also helped out at many ICOS events e.g. Children's Day in Backhouse Park. Everyone in the community has massively benefitted from the hard work of the volunteers from the ICOS Women's group.

2. Through the ICOS Women project, we supported a woman originally from Poland, who is a survivor of domestic abuse. She approached us in February 2023. after she had fled and moved into new accommodation. However, she was at risk destitution, as despite being employed, she did not have any white goods or furniture. This situation was having a negative effect on her wellbeing and health.

ICOS's one-to-one needs tailored support has helped her with settling into her new accommodation, we helped her with applying for individual grants for white goods such as washing machine which has been great support for her. The cost-of-living crisis was also having a negative effect on her wellbeing and finances. Through the project, we were able to support her with energy top up and a referral to her local food bank. She received support with applying for benefits that she was entitled to but not claiming previously, such as Universal Credit and Council Tax support, her financial situation has improved. It also prevented her from becoming homeless. As a result of her situation, she was in more than £5000 debt, and ICOS also referred her for debt counselling. This has enabled her to enter into an agreement with the creditors, and she has now paid off one of the debts. The support she has received helped her a lot to recover and when she was ready, she started to attend women's group activities at ICOS where she had met new friends, she now feels safe and included.