



**Sunderland  
City Council**



H (originally from Iran, male, aged 60, a refugee), approached ICOS in April 2024. He was facing a number of issues, including just being through the asylum process, limited English language skills, exclusion from accessing services and financial exclusion due to his short stay in the UK, and language barriers.

During the initial conversation, Vanessa, the project worker supporting H through the Links for Life project, established the main needs and agreed a way forward with the client. They mostly focused around the need to quickly adjust to the new situation he found himself in- being a refugee who had just been granted status, and needing support with finding accommodation, and accessing financial support, as well as opening a bank account, so that he could access the appropriate benefits, and make payments.

There was a need to act quickly, but also, to track the progress of multiple applications and processes going on at the same time. Vanessa applied her experience and skills to the task, and supported H to apply for a house with Gentoo (the housing association). This included ensuring that all the details were filled in correctly, and all the supporting information was provided to Gentoo, so that the waiting period is as short as possible. The application was successful, and in July 2024, H was able to move into a Gentoo property.

H also needed a bank account, so that he could pay the rent, and receive benefits, as well as use it for services such as utilities. Vanessa supported H to apply for a bank account, enabling him to understand what documents needed to be provided, and attending an in person appointment with him at a local bank in order to provide support with what was a completely new process for him. This was successful, and the client was able to open a bank account, making him safer and more independent.

Having moved into his new home, the client lacked any furniture, and had very limited financial resources to pay for any new furniture items. Vanessa applied to the Sunderland Guild of Help grant on his behalf in September 2024. In October, he received £120 towards the cost of buying essential furniture (a sofa bed) for his home. Alongside supporting H, ICOS has also provided support to his wife, and an adult daughter. The family now live together. The family have now started attending ICOS's wellbeing sessions, and they reported these started to make them feel better and more included.

H and his family now feels safer, and more independent, and they have a place to call home.