

ICOS Annual Report 2024 – 2025

Introduction:

As chairperson of ICOS, I would like to first and foremost thank our funders for supporting us throughout what was a challenging, yet fruitful year for the organization. I would also like to thank our funders, donors and sponsors- without your generous funding even the worthiest cause and the most effective organization could not survive. We exist to help our clients to integrate, access services and thrive, and we are grateful to them also, as they have given back so much, especially our volunteers and those clients who have provided advice to us on how we can become even more effective and involving.

Rafal Marzec

Chair of ICOS

ABOUT ICOS:

We

- Connect people to opportunities
- Defend people's rights
- Bring people from different cultural backgrounds together

In order to fulfil our mission, we provide the following activities:

- Information, Advice, Guidance and Advocacy work (individual casework) in a wide range of diverse areas, from employability to welfare rights
- Volunteering opportunities
- Cultural activities

Our values are:

- Justice
- Equality
- Involvement
- Connectedness
- Commitment

- Antiracism
- Inclusion

Commitment to partnership working:

We see partnership work as key to our past and future success. We work closely with a variety of partners, including the Sunderland Black and Minority Ethnic Network, local councils (notably, Sunderland City Council), health authorities, emergency services, community organisations and local businesses.

Our motto is: “Advocating for rights, creating opportunities”.

Executive summary:

Over the past year, the International Community Organisation of Sunderland (ICOS) has continued to stand alongside migrant and minority communities, offering practical support, friendship, and opportunities to thrive. Despite financial pressures, the cost-of-living crisis, and the painful impact of the 2024 racist riots, our community has shown strength, solidarity, and resilience.

Our Impact

In total, ICOS supported 781 people, including 558 who received one-to-one advice on housing, welfare, employability, and immigration. Many lives have been positively changed: over half of those we worked with reported improved wellbeing, 40% saw their financial situation improve, and 39 people moved into paid work. Others progressed into education or training, secured housing, or felt safer and more confident in their daily lives.

Beyond advice, we provided material support such as food vouchers, SIM cards, clothing, and energy grants to more than 200 people. Our wellbeing and cultural activities brought people together across backgrounds—310 people met new friends from different cultures, while 60 activities like coastal walks, sports, and family trips helped reduce loneliness and build community spirit.

Volunteering remained at the heart of our work, with 125 people giving their time, energy, and skills. Environmental activities also grew, with over 300 people taking part in clean-ups and awareness events, and 70% of participants going on to take further environmental action.

Projects That Make a Difference

Our multi-year projects have been especially powerful. Back in Control 2 supported survivors of modern slavery and exploitation, helping them find safety, stability, and independence. Shared Sunderland, run with SBIC and New Horizon, empowered 366 people through advice, leadership training, and community campaigns—16 participants even stepped into formal leadership roles.

Strength in People and Partnerships

What makes ICOS unique is our people. Our dedicated staff and growing volunteer team go the extra mile every day. Together with partners—from local councils to schools and community groups—we are breaking down barriers and amplifying the voices of those too often unheard.

Looking Forward

As we celebrated ICOS's 15th anniversary, we also looked ahead. Our new 2025–2030 strategy will focus on building sustainable income (including a community café), strengthening client involvement, and expanding popular projects such as ICOS Women, sports, wellbeing, and environmental work.

At its heart, ICOS is about people—supporting one another, creating opportunities, and building a fairer, more connected Sunderland.

Highlights:

Total number of people supported: 781 (many one-off event attendees were not registered)

Total number of advice clients within this number: 558

Improved wellbeing: 108 out of 207 (52.17%)

Reduced social isolation: 61 out of 203 (30.05%)

Improved confidence: 47 out of 109 (41.28%)

Improved housing situation: 30 out of 84 (35.71%)

Improved financial situation: 66 out of 164 (40.24%)

Feeling safer: 19 out of 57 (30.33%)

39 people have progressed into paid employment (the projects directly supporting employability work at ICOS were only worth £25 000 in total during that period)

60 people have achieved a qualification or progressed into education or training

24 people have received support with their immigration status. Many more have been referred to external organisations due to requiring support at a higher level than our regulation enables us to.

60 people have reported receiving a benefit award/entitlement (we believe this to be undercounted, e.g., due to some clients not recognizing a council tax discount as an award). These included Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment

310 people who have attended wellbeing activities have reported meeting new people from a different culture.

125 people across different projects have volunteered, including 50 regular volunteers, not counting environmental volunteers.

Over 300 people, including children have taken part in environmental activities such as clean ups and awareness raising activities.

12 people have received grants made towards energy costs. Awards have ranged from £98 to £900, and the awards have been made by a range of funders, including the National Energy Action, Unity in Community, the Household Support Fund

We have provided an estimated 200 clients with material support, including sim cards, food vouchers, food bank referrals, clothing and toy items, or refunded travel costs.

We have delivered a total of 60 wellbeing activities, including a Coastal Walk, Tennis, Bowling, Seal Sands Walk, White Lea- Farm walk, Bowling, Souter Lighthouse, Sports, Santa Day, Snowboarding, Ceramics, Go Karting, Coastal Walk, Creating Bird Feeders, Kayaking, Water Sports, Spilmans Farm Trip, Rowing, Diggerland, Coastering and many more.

Environmental: We have delivered a total of 70 environmental activity days through the East Rangers project alone, engaging a total of total of total of 300 people. 70% of those we were able to ask asked took environmental action as a result of the project.

Major project spanning over several years:

Back in Control 2 (August 2022 – November 2025)

The project has provided vital and valuable support to migrant people affected by Modern Day Slavery and Workplace Exploitation in Sunderland and the surrounding area.

This has especially focused on several aspects of their lives:

- Benefits
- Housing
- Support with immigration issues
- Material support
- Removing barriers in a flexible way
- General support and life and the UK, civic duties
- Employability
- Supporting asylum seekers
- Involvement and inclusion

At the time of writing, draft results were available, which indicated the following:

Overall number of clients: Agreed: 100 Achieved: 92 Some data for: 67			
Outcome	Outcome indicator	Intervention (s)	Achieved:
Improved wellbeing	68%	-Counselling and other health and wellbeing interventions -Effect of general support and advice, including support with entitlements -The work delivered by our partner- Impact North East CIC will be crucial to achieving this outcome.	59.7%
Improved financial situation	55%	-Holistic advice and advocacy on accessing benefits and entitlements	52.31%
Improved stability for individuals and family units	62%	-Holistic advice and advocacy on accessing benefits and entitlements -Immigration advice (partners such as North	86.97%

		East Law Centre and Children's Society will have a crucial role) -Health and wellbeing interventions	
Prevention, discovery and rescue	20%	-ICOS will discover potential cases of exploitation and prevent, or stop it from happening. We will utilise community contacts and community intelligence and refer clients to GLAA/the police if appropriate.	53.26%
Involvement through volunteering	20% (20 clients)	-ICOS will identify and support volunteers, who will support several aspects of project delivery, including the PSG, peer-to-peer support and awareness raising.	20.41%

Additionally:

71.43% have reported that their issues had been resolved
 53% said that their involvement in the programme had prevented further exploitation
 50% reported feeling more independent
 46.77% have reported an improved housing situation
 43.75% have reported feeling safer
 43% have reported improved English language skills
 40.3% reported feeling more optimistic about their future

*these figures are based on those who have responded / who we have been able to exit

We were not able to get full data for 29.35% of the clients- due to a number of issues, including moving abroad, changing contact details, or, most often, not being available to take part in an exit discussion at the time when they were contacted. We attempted at least three contacts on at different times on on different days.

Shared Sunderland:

Project Updates

The Shared Sunderland Project (2022–2025), which was led by the International Community Organisation of Sunderland (ICOS), Sunderland Bangladesh International Centre (SBIC), and New Horizon (NH), was designed to empower migrant communities in Sunderland. Through various initiatives, it provided direct support, influenced public policy, and fostered leadership within these communities.

1. One-to-One Advice and Advocacy

- Provided guidance on housing, benefits, immigration (Level 1 regulated), and access to services to 366 individuals.
- Indirectly benefited many others, including household members.
- The project focused on marginalized groups, such as asylum seekers, refugees, and survivors of domestic abuse.
- 78 were in need of immigration advice and support, including passport applications. 60 needed support with housing (including registrations with housing associations, presenting to the council as homeless and general advice on housing, such as disrepair. 100 needed support with benefits, including applying for benefits and understanding decisions, as well as reviews and appeals. 17 needed support with accessing the health service, e.g., GP registrations. 54 needed support with managing their universal credit account due to language barriers and / or lack of access to devices or low IT skills. 56 were facing other problems, such as domestic abuse, school registration.

- This service, while resource-intensive, made a significant difference in people's lives:

-64% (228 individuals) have reported improved wellbeing

-50% (182 individuals) have reported improved housing situation

-54% (197 individuals) have reported improved financial situation

-6% (19) have reported that their immigration issue has been resolved.

1. Engagement with Public and Non-Profit Organisations

- Worked to make institutions more inclusive and migrant-friendly.
- Addressed issues like housing access, cost of living, and antiracism in schools.
- Partnered with Tyne and Wear Citizens (TWIC) and Citizens UK for national and local campaigns.
- Richard Avenue Primary School and Thornhill School were engaged in adopting the National Education Union's Antiracism Charter.
- Delivered awareness sessions on Asian, Black African, and Eastern European migrant communities, influencing VCSE and public sector organisations.

1. Building Sustainable Change & Community Representation

- Formed a Project Steering Group (PSG) with 8 migrant leaders from diverse backgrounds.
- Established a Sunderland Hub of TWIC, allowing migrant voices to reach public sector bodies.
- Contributed to the mayoral pledge to increase affordable and social housing.

- Successfully influenced regional education policies, including the Racial Justice in Education Campaign, which became a priority campaign for TWIC.

1. Leadership and Community Engagement

- Engaged 64 individuals in leadership activities such as enterprise training, voter registration, environmental activism, and local governance.
- Encouraged community members to pursue roles as school governors, councillors, and election candidates.
- Helped increase confidence and participation in formal and informal leadership roles.
- A total of 64 clients have taken part in leadership activities (many but not all of them have also benefited from advice) Out of this number 39 people have reported accomplishing goals and achievements in leadership. A total of 16 individuals who took part in the leadership progressed into formal leadership positions as direct result of participation.
- Additionally, 45 people of them have indicated that they felt more confident pursuing their leadership interests following taking part in the programme.

1. Microgrants for Local Initiatives

- Provided five projects (three organisations) with funding to enhance community leadership and service delivery.
- The grant-making process was developed with PSG members, further fostering leadership skills.

1. Expansion of Immigration Advice Services

- ICOS became OISC/IAA-registered in April 2023, enabling Level 1 immigration advice.

- As of January 2025, one staff member and one volunteer are providing immigration support, with two additional staff members training for certification by late summer 2025.
- SBIC and NH are working towards OISC/IAA registration, with NH staff aiming for certification in spring 2025.
- Partnered with organisations like Migrant Help and the North East Law Centre to meet the demand for immigration support, particularly for EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) applications and E-visas.

1. Strengthening Partnerships

- Collaborated with TWIC, North East Law Centre, Migrant Help, Together for Children, Sunderland City Council, The Phoenix Way, and the North East Antiracism Coalition (formed after the 2024 racist riots).

The Shared Sunderland project has been instrumental in supporting migrant communities by providing advice, advocacy, leadership development, and policy influence. Despite challenges, it has built sustainable structures that continue beyond its funding period, creating a lasting impact on inclusion, local policy, and migrant empowerment in Sunderland.

We are grateful to our funder- Paul Hamlyn Foundation for their support.

Case studies:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZNL6-ZB70A> (several case studies on leadership)

<https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Shared-Sunderland-Leadership-Case-study-Chompa.pdf>

<https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Shared-Sunderland-case-study-Amez.pdf>

<https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Alina-Shared-Sunderland-Case-Study.pdf>

<https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Shared-Sunderland-case-study-Semira.pdf>

<https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Maciej-Case-Study-Shared-Sunderland.pdf>

Strengths, achievements and opportunities:

We have a very motivated, focused, and skilled workforce. Our staff are also committed to our organization's mission, and often willing to go an extra mile for the clients they support, and for the sake of the projects they deliver. Our staff members are also interested in upskilling themselves, and in their continuous professional development.

We have also got an increasing number of volunteers supporting our delivery, including many dedicated regular volunteers. Many of them are current students or recent graduates, but some come from other walks of life, including unemployed or economically inactive people, as well as the over 50s. This increasing volunteer base has enabled us to increase our capacity, notably in areas such as running events and some communications functions, such as social media and the newsletter. This is a vital resource to ICOS, and it helps us to deliver more services, and better services for the people. The main areas our volunteers have been involved in include wellbeing activities, environmental activities, women's activities, and sports, as well as office volunteering (e.g., administration and communication).

ICOS has been able to develop new partnerships with several organisations from the VCSE sector, as well as the private companies. These partnerships are enabling us to tap into more potential and increase our capacity to deliver our projects, including through accessing extra funds, accessing corporate volunteers, and applying for funding together. Organisations we have recently started working closely with include Newcastle Building Society, Durham Wildlife Trust, or British Gas.

Wellbeing and environmental activities featured prominently in our work, as we took care of the local area (focusing on Backhouse Park in St Michael's Ward), where we deliver regular activities at least twice a week, and we have just started creating a composting heap. Regular sports and wellbeing sessions have brought joy to many, and enabled people to get together.

In July 2024, ICOS celebrated its 15th birthday- the process culminated in our official celebration in October 2024. We utilized this opportunity to engage with stakeholders, especially our clients, through focus group discussions and a random survey. As a result, we have created, and are now implementing our 2025-2030 strategy, which includes plans to generate unrestricted income through creating a community café, enabling even more clients to shape our services through creating an organization-wide Project Steering Group, and recruiting trustees with the experience of the asylum system, amongst other development areas.

ICOS's has been able to amplify the voices of our clients and communities to influence processes affecting them. For example, we have effectively worked with the Tyne and Wear Citizens (TWIC) to influence structures and systems affecting our clients, such as housing, immigration law or antiracist education. We have created and contributed to research, including through co – production and involvement approaches, which has been published:

<https://www.sunderland.ac.uk/more/news/university-news/2025/language-barriers-university-sunderland-research/>

<https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/view/journals/jgbv/aop/article-10.1332-23986808Y2024D000000060/article-10.1332-23986808Y2024D000000060.xml>

<https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Together-Through-Crisis-Report-Final-edit-compressed.pdf>

The ICOS Women project is growing in size and impact, and the women benefit not just from one to one support and social meet ups, but also co-produce the project through the Project Steering Group, which decides the direction of the work. It has recently grown from 8 to 12. The group now also influences external bodies through research, including research projects focusing on the impact of poverty on Eastern European families.

Women have also been able to find a space within this group to develop their own projects and initiatives, including the Mum's Club (which was originally developed by a volunteer who had young children). This project has now been expanded to Newcastle upon Tyne / North Tyneside through our cooperation with the Polish Saturday School.

We are pleased that the Back in Control 2 project's Project Steering Group has continued to contribute to effective delivery of the project through enabling co-production with the clients. The group currently involves 6 members, or all who have the experience of either modern day slavery, workplace exploitation, and in some cases- both. Through working with the PSG, we are implementing changes to the project in areas such as more effective wellbeing support, and or employability support.

Staff morale and wellbeing remain high, as shown in our wellbeing surveys, as illustrated by anonymous comments about being confident and happy. This has been consistent during the year, starting from early spring / late winter period. We hope to maintain high levels of morale, as well as wellbeing.

Challenges and issues:

Our clients encounter complex, overlapping challenges when trying to access entitlements, benefits, housing, essential services, and secure immigration status. Migrants are among the most affected by the housing and cost of living crises, often lacking the safety nets or family networks that others rely on. Restrictive, inflexible, and at times hostile immigration policies create further obstacles. Added financial pressures, such as the NHS surcharge, make their situations even more precarious.

Our charity is also under growing financial strain. The loss of EU funding, combined with the smaller and more restrictive UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), has reduced the resources available to us. Many funders have paused grant-giving, tightened their criteria, or shifted to invitation-only funding. This is particularly difficult for ICOS, as we serve migrants broadly rather than focusing on specific subgroups. Inflation has further diminished the value of grants—funding that once covered a staff role now barely makes a dent. The recently announced rise in employer national insurance contributions will also push our overheads higher. Since staffing is our largest expense, and many funders are unwilling to cover it, the pressure is mounting.

As a result, ICOS has very limited capacity in essential areas such as communications, data management, and administration, with finance also under strain. Short-term and restrictive funding prevents us from building sustainable capacity, while staff are often unable to increase hours due to caring responsibilities, studies, or immigration restrictions. Staff turnover—linked to personal circumstances, immigration issues, and the impact of the racist riots—has further disrupted our capacity. These pressures have forced us to extend project delivery timescales, both internally and with subcontractors.

Client engagement also poses challenges: around 10–15% of clients disengage from projects. This is unsurprising given the transient nature of the communities we support—refugees often move after securing status, seeking family connections, work opportunities, or safety from discrimination. While natural, this mobility requires significant time and resources to safeguard their wellbeing during their engagement with us. Although we use a strong data management system, these movements also affect data consistency.

The cost of living crisis has left many clients worse off than when they first registered with us. Even so, client feedback consistently shows that our support makes a vital difference—without it, their situations would be far more severe.

The racist riots of 2024 have had a particularly damaging impact on community cohesion in Sunderland, one of the worst-affected northern cities. Although the immediate violence has subsided, the aftereffects remain. Many of our clients, staff, and volunteers live in the affected areas and still fear renewed attacks. Our office had to close early several times for safety reasons, and we paid for taxis to ensure staff and volunteers could get home safely. Sadly, some volunteers have since stepped back, and one staff member relocated to a more diverse city where they felt safer. The riots have left our community shaken, and we are deeply concerned about the long-term impact—whether they will embolden racist attitudes or fuel further violence.

Another area in need of improvement is external communication. Feedback from clients, staff, volunteers, and partner organisations highlights this as a gap. Limited resources have held back progress, but we recognise strengthening communication as a priority. Encouragingly, we have seen growth in engagement on LinkedIn.

Finally, it is a feature of our work that the issues faced by staff often mirror those of our clients. Limited immigration status can restrict staff members' ability to work, hampering recruitment, retention, and progression.

Client needs and support:

We supporting 15-30 people each week, 2-4 of them new. We continue to provide advice with benefits, housing and access to basic services such as healthcare and schools. Many clients have come searching for support with finding work. It appears that the labour market downturn has been having an effect on the local area and less jobs are available- which means that our support is even more needed. The employability work covers not only support with job searching or creating and updating CVs, but also identifying and accessing training– this is often tricky due to issues such as funding rules and language barriers. The housing situation in the local area is difficult, and this greatly affects our clients' ability to find a home for themselves and their family. This is especially the case for those who have to move suddenly, e.g., people who have recently been granted asylum in the UK, or those affected by domestic abuse or family break down. Providing material support, including food vouchers (for eligible clients on certain projects), sim cards and referrals for clothing and sometimes- is also something we often (all too often) do to support our clients. Digital support has become more prominent within ICOS's wider advice work, as we have recently finished the digital project due to the fact that more and more services are becoming online by default. This is something many of our clients struggle with, as they face extra barriers to accessing digital services, such as lack of familiarity with UK systems (digital or not), language barrier, limited access to connectivity (devices, internet connection), as well as frequently changing contact details (e.g., due to asylum seekers getting new sim cards in order to get more data). Case studies illustrating recent support have been included.

Client voice and the annual survey:

The survey annual survey is instrumental in setting out the future priorities of our work, and delivering on our commitment to client involvement and co – production, as set out in our 2025- 2030 strategic plan, and it includes input on client feedback and their experiences of our support, issues our clients are facing, their aspirations, and future priorities. We asked our clients the following questions:

- What issues has ICOS helped you with in the past?
- Could you rate the support you have received from ICOS on a rising 1 – 10 scale? (1 is "poor")
- If anything, what could we have done better?
- What current issues do you need help with?
- How can ICOS best help you with these issues?
- What additional services would you like ICOS to provide?
- Is there anything ICOS should do more of? (including services, events and activities)

- Is there anything you think ICOS should stop doing or do differently?
- What is the most valuable/impactful type of support you have received from ICOS?

- What are your hopes and goals for the next 12 months?
- What are your fears and worries about the next 12 months?
- Is there anything ICOS can do to support you with those?

- Have you got any further suggestions?
- Would you be prepared to take part in a case study?

While staff members had more time to deliver this work over the summer than if we run it at a different time of the year, many clients were not available to talk. Some (few) declined. We were therefore able to contact a total of 33 clients, less than the planned sample of 60. The learning from this might indicate that we need to implement a good plan B when we do the survey next year- e.g., we make sure that if one person is not available, we go to the next person on the list.

Preliminary findings from the survey indicate:

- The **top areas of concern** are **employment/training** and **housing/homelessness**, each raised by multiple respondents.
- **Financial and legal/documentation issues** were mentioned but less frequently.
- A few respondents noted **health or wellbeing-related support needs**.
- Some responses suggest **ongoing uncertainty**

The survey results suggest that:

- **Housing and employment** remain the most pressing challenges for participants.
- **Financial struggles and legal/documentation barriers** are also notable but secondary concerns.
- There is was also a demand for **integration, language, and community activities** that help with social connection.

☐ The strongest theme: **people are very satisfied overall** — many simply want ICOS to keep doing what it already does. About 30% would like us to change nothing. Additionally, 79% of those taking part rated us at 10 out of 10 on a rising Likert scale, where 10 was “excellent”.

☐ **Practical help** (supplies, letters, translation, vouchers, problem-solving) was core area to maintain.

☐ **Community and social activities** (events, trips, volunteering) are also important — many want *more* of them, and activities for children, as well as family activities- mentions suggest some demand for children’s activities. There was also some demand for cultural trips.

• **Employability activities**- there was a considerable demand for employment support, including training and job applications, perhaps indicating a growing trend.

None of the clients felt that there was anything specific ICOS should stop doing completely.

Practical support (housing, food, documents, translation) is the most frequently cited area.

Community activities and emotional support are almost equally valued, highlighting the role ICOS plays in reducing isolation and improving wellbeing.

Several participants mentioned "everything" or general positive support, which suggests strong overall satisfaction.

When asked about the most valuable support they had received from ICOS, the clients highlighted the following:

Practical / Material Support

- Baby supplies
- Food vouchers
- Housing application, accommodation help
- Debt repayment help
- Travel/passport documents
- Translation / interpreting / GP support

Employment, Training & Skills

- Employment support
- CSCS training access
- Information about courses & training
- Support with access to training & new skills

Emotional / Social Support

- Avoiding loneliness & isolation
- Being listened to
- Support with complaints / trauma
- Dedication, advice, encouragement
- Feeling of safety

Community / Social Activities

- Wellbeing walks
- Trips (e.g., Beamish)
- Meetings for families from different backgrounds
- Sports, activities, workshops
- Events participation
- Opportunity & time together

General / Holistic Support

- "Many things" / "Everything" / "All kinds of support"
- "No" / "Nothing"

2. Frequency of Themes

Theme	Count
Practical / Material Support	8
Employment, Training & Skills	4
Emotional / Social Support	5
Community / Social Activities	7
General / Holistic	6

We have also asked about the hopes and fears our clients had. Perhaps indicating the general lack of stability affecting our clients, we have had less responses to these questions than to the other questions. While we are less certain with regards to these responses, that to the other responses, however, it is important that people's hopes and often fears both centred on employment and income issues.

To summarize, it can be said that ICOS and its work are highly valued, and the main areas to focus on appear to be advice and advocacy, employability, and wellbeing activities, especially family and children – focused.

Related to this is the work we have done to progress the objectives set out in the review itself, including co – production and involvement. The staff worked on engaging with clients to ask them to become members of the ICOS – wide Project Steering Group (PSG) and shape our work, with its initial meeting, which occurred September 2025. This initial meeting enabled us to set up ground rules for involvement and plan next steps, but we have already gained valuable knowledge with regards to clients' priorities, with clients mentioning the importance of our environmental work to their wellbeing, the importance of combatting social isolation, and making sure more people were aware of our work. The minutes from this meeting are not yet available. While the PSG meetings will eventually happen on a quarterly basis, they will be scheduled more often at the beginning in order to ensure enough momentum and prevent disengagement, and the next meeting will take place on 15/10/2025.

Future plans:

- Following up on the strategic review of our work.
- Further advance plans for income generation in order to secure the core of our work in the light of the financial challenges described above. These plans include establishing a coffee shop to generate extra income, and being commissioned by local / regional commissioners.
- Utilizing greater financial resources to create spare capacity within the organization to meet current and future challenges, and ensure good outcomes for our clients, and the wider community, as well as good staff wellbeing and morale.
- Improving our external communications.

-Building on our recent success, including the popular and well performing projects, such as ICOS Women, ICOS Sport / Wellbeing and our environmental work, as well as research and influencing work.

Thank you to our funders:





Nature
HUBS

**Nora Smith
Charitable
Settlement**

NE North East
Combined
Authority


Leeds Building Society
Foundation



BA Better World



Arnold Clark
**COMMUNITY
FUND**



BENTLEY







**Sunderland
City Council**



Garfield Weston
FOUNDATION

LLOYDS BANK FOUNDATION 
England & Wales



Appendix 1: case studies:

Employability:

<https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Case-Study1218.pdf>

<https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Case-study-716.pdf>

<https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Case-study-732.pdf>

Advice and advocacy:

<https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/ICOS-women-case-studies-.pdf>
(women)

<https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/K-case-study-Links-for-Life-.pdf>

<https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/H-case-study-Links-for-Life.pdf>

<https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Links-for-Life-Case-Study-MS.pdf>

Empowerment and community development:

<https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Shared-Sunderland-Leadership-Case-study-Chompa.pdf>

https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Quetes_Shared_Sunderland.pdf
(quotes)

<https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Health-Champion-Case-Studies-.pdf>

Volunteering including environment:

<https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Greener-Activities-Programme-Olusegun-Case-Study.pdf>

<https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Volunteer-Case-Study-Folashade.pdf>

<https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/70.100-Case-study-Kelly.pdf>

Appendix 2: photos:





WORLD DAY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE



**ADVOCATING FOR RIGHTS,
CREATING OPPORTUNITIES**

20 FEBRUARY 2025

MARCH 08 | INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Happy Women's Day!

YOU ARE INCREDIBLE, AND WE VALUE
YOUR VOICES, IDEAS AND STRENGTHS













SUNDERLAND'S VOLUNTARY SECTOR SPRING CONFERENCE

'ONE COMMUNITY: MANY VOICES'

VCAS are pleased to announce the VCSE sector spring conference of 2025. The voluntary sector and the local communities we represent have faced a number of significant and ongoing challenges over a number of years.

Lets hear what you have to say.

WEDNESDAY 26TH MARCH
9.30AM - 3.30PM

Keynote speakers:



**JOHN
TOMANEY**

Professor of Urban and Regional Planning in the Bartlett School of Planning & Pro-Vovost (Regional Communities) University College London.



**ROBIN
FINLAY**

Dr Finlay is the Partnerships Manager and Research Associate, at The Institute for Economic and Social Inclusion at The University of Sunderland



**LOUISE
KEMPTON**

Professor of Urban and Regional Policy at Newcastle University and Strategic Director for Insights North East



**MARTIN
BROOKES**

Martin is Chief Executive Officer VONNE
The Regional support body for the North East Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector.



**SHAUN
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Shaun is the Chief Executive Officer for Easington Lane Community Action Point [ELCAP]



**MICHAL
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Michal works as a Development Manager for The International Communities of Sunderland [ICOS]



**RUTH
WALKER**

Ruth is the Operational Manager for Sunderland's All Together Consortium





