



Happy April from ICOS!



Hello and welcome to the late April newsletter.

In this newsletter, we will share some exciting events coming up, an opportunity to join our Project Steering Group (PSG). We will also share the impact of some of our projects and an exciting project that has just started.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter.

What has been going on in our ICOS Community?

Since the last newsletter we have:

- We have dealt with 68 queries, ranging from support with council tax support, support with Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment (PIP), housing support and support surrounding employability (accessing employment and training).
- We have organised a number of activities, improving social inclusion, wellbeing, intercultural understanding, and helping the environment in the local area. Including 4

environmental activities, including clean ups and maintenance activities, centered on Backhouse Park, Sunderland, and the wider St Michael's ward area.

- We have provided 7 families with material support or external referrals to access free clothing and food, and external grants, as well as energy and food vouchers and free sim card.



Upcoming Events:

Wellbeing Walk: Low Newton to Beadnell

Tuesday 19 May 2026

9:30 @ ICOS, 14 Foyle Street,
Sunderland, SR1 1LE

For booking, please contact
daniel@icos.org.uk



The poster features a scenic view of a coastal town with stone buildings and a beach. The text 'WELLBEING WALK' is written in large, green, block letters. Below it, a map shows the route from 'LOW NEWTON' to 'BEADNELL' with a distance of '~3 MILES'. The date 'Tuesday 19 May 2026' is displayed next to a calendar icon. A 'Meeting & bus pick-up' section lists the time as 9:30 am and the location as ICOS, 14 Foyle Street, Sunderland. A 'BOOK NOW' button is provided with the email daniel@icos.org.uk. A description of the walk is included: 'Join us for a coastal walk from Low Newton to Beadnell. Wander along sandy beaches, past dunes and the charming harbour, while breathing in the fresh Northumberland sea air.' Two bullet points at the bottom right indicate 'Free transport' and 'Free lunch'. Logos for ICOS, Community Foundation North East, VONNE HEALTH + WELLBEING, North East Combined Authority, and Northumbria Police & Crime Commissioner are at the bottom.

WELLBEING WALK

LOW NEWTON
→ BEADNELL
(~3 MILES)

Tuesday
19 May 2026

Meeting & bus pick-up:
9:30 am
ICOS, 14 Foyle Street, Sunderland

Join us for a coastal walk from **Low Newton to Beadnell**. Wander along sandy beaches, past dunes and the charming harbour, while breathing in the fresh Northumberland sea air.

- Free transport
- Free lunch

BOOK NOW >>>
daniel@icos.org.uk

ICOS Community Foundation North East VONNE HEALTH + WELLBEING North East Combined Authority Northumbria Police & Crime Commissioner

Free For All Community Tennis

Saturday 25 April 2026

15:30 - 17:00 @ Barley Mow Park,
65M Ryhope Rd, Hendon, Sunderland
SR2 9RQ

For booking, please contact Daniel on
07783433674



The poster features a photograph of a person in a bright green jacket sitting on a tennis court. The text 'FREE FOR ALL COMMUNITY TENNIS' is prominent at the top. Below it, the slogan 'MEET NEW PEOPLE HAVE FUN FEEL GOOD' is displayed. A description of the sessions is provided: 'Join our friendly tennis sessions open to all ages and abilities. No experience needed, just come along and enjoy!'. A table lists the time and date as 15.30-17.00 on Saturday 25th April, the place as Barley Mow Park, Hendon, and the booking contact as Daniel @ 07783433674. A note states 'equipment provided on site' and 'All sessions are accompanied by a mentor.' Logos for Active Sunderland and STA Sunderland are at the bottom.

FREE FOR ALL COMMUNITY TENNIS

MEET NEW PEOPLE
HAVE FUN
FEEL GOOD

Join our friendly tennis sessions open to all ages and abilities. No experience needed, just come along and enjoy!

equipment provided on site

All sessions are accompanied by a mentor.

time and date	15.30-17.00 SATURDAY 25 TH APRIL
place	BARLEY MOW PARK HENDON
booking	DANIEL @ 07783433674

Active Sunderland STA Sunderland

Seaglass Jewellery & Art Session for Women

Friday 15 May 2026

5-7pm @ St Michaels Community
Centre, Sunderland, SR2 9JT

For booking, please contact
katarzyna.zarebska@icos.org.uk



Seaham Trip for Women and Children

Saturday 09 May 2026

12:30pm @ ICOS, 14 Foyle Street, Sunderland, SR1 1LE

For booking, please contact katarzyna.zarebska@icos.org.uk



Previous Events:

Stronger Shores Wellbeing Walk:

Please click on the image for more information



The Giving Lottery:

Go here: <https://www.givinglottery.org.uk/support/icos>

Or scan the QR code!


JOIN OUR WEEKLY LOTTERY!

Play for a chance to win up to £25,000
and support our fundraising every week



-  Tickets cost just £1 a week
-  Every entry helps support our community projects
-  Win up to £25,000 in the weekly draw



 Scan Me



INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY
ORGANISATION
OF SUNDERLAND



Support ICOS through easyfundraising:

We would like to share a simple way you can support ICOS at no extra cost to you.

ICOS is now on easyfundraising. This means that when you shop online through the easyfundraising website or app, participating retailers will make a donation to ICOS.

All you need to do is sign up, choose ICOS as your cause, and shop as normal.

It is free to use, easy to set up, and a great way to support our work without making a direct donation yourself.

If you shop online, please consider using easyfundraising and sharing it with others.

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/panel/>

Thank you for your continued support.

**SHOP ONLINE
SUPPORT ICOS
FOR FREE**

every time you shop, participating retailers donate to ICOS at no extra cost to you

sign up to easy funding → choose ICOS as your cause → shop as normal at your favorite stores

easy fundraising for ICOS

ICOS

The infographic features a central text box with a light blue background and a white border. To the right, there are three shopping bags in orange, teal, and red, and a smartphone displaying a heart icon and the text 'easy fundraising for ICOS'. At the bottom, there are two logos: the ICOS logo (a colorful puzzle piece) and a sunburst logo.

ICOS Project Steering Group (PSG):

HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF ICOS!



Have you been supported by the International Community Organisation of Sunderland (ICOS) for at least 3 months? If you have an intermediate level of English and want to make a real difference, we want to hear from you!

We are looking for passionate clients to join our **Project Steering Group (PSG)**—an advisory group designed to help us run a better service for you and the community.

1 WHY JOIN THE PSG?

Your voice matters. As someone who has used our advice, volunteered, or joined our environmental and wellbeing activities, you are the expert on situation. By joining, you can:

1. **Shape our projects.**
2. **Get creative.**
3. **Access Free Training.**
4. **Build your CV.**
5. **Represent ICOS.**

2 WHAT IS THE COMMITMENT?

We value your time and want this to be a positive experience:

- **Meetings:** Currently meeting slightly more often as we start up; standard is 1 meeting every 3 months.
- **Support:** Reasonable expenses (travel/food) will be provided or refunded.
- **Flexibility:** You are a volunteer and can stop at any time.
- **Respect:** We follow simple ground rules regarding confidentiality and respect.

Ready to get involved?

If you want to help ICOS grow and better serve Sunderland, or if you have any questions, please contact Michal at:

✉ michal@icos.org.uk

City of Nature Sunderland:

City of Nature Sunderland is a three-year community project helping people across Sunderland connect with nature, improve wellbeing and take action for the environment in their local communities.

The project is delivered by Durham Wildlife Trust in partnership with ICOS and funded by The National Lottery Community Fund.

City of Nature will work with community groups across the city to design and deliver inclusive nature-based activities that bring people closer to the natural world while supporting a greener, healthier Sunderland.

Over the next three years, the City of Nature project will:

- Work with communities to co-design seasonal nature-based activities and workshops
- Support people to connect with local green spaces and wildlife
- Encourage community-led environmental action
- Promote wellbeing, learning and skills through nature
- Help more people feel confident to take positive action for the environment

Activities will take place across the city and may include nature discovery sessions, wildlife walks, growing activities, practical conservation work and creative nature workshops.

Working with communities

City of Nature is particularly focused on working with communities who may not traditionally have access to environmental activities or who face barriers to engaging with nature.

We want to work alongside community organisations to develop activities that are:

- welcoming and inclusive
- shaped by the interests of local people
- accessible and relevant to different communities

By listening to communities and working together, the project aims to support people to build confidence, develop new skills and take part in shaping a more nature-friendly city.

ICOS's role within the programme will be to ensure access for migrant and BME communities and enable involvement and engagement of these communities, ensuring that they are connected to local environment.

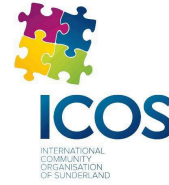
For more information, please contact:

Shila Laskar:

shila@icos.org.uk

07392957048

The project is generously funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.



Newcastle Mums Club 2025-2026 Project:

Check out the amazing impact we've made together! with the Newcastle Polish School!

<https://www.schoolofpolishnewcastle.co.uk/>

☀️ The numbers are in for the Newcastle Mums Club 2025-2026 project, and we are so proud of what this community has achieved.

👨👩👧👦 Growing Our Family

- Double the Fun: We hoped to reach 35 children, but 64 kids actually joined in on the fun!
- Stronger Together: 51 mums became part of our weekly sessions, creating a vibrant network of support.
- Total Impact: Altogether, 115 individuals benefited from the project.

🌈 Real Results for Real Life

It's not just about the numbers; it's about how we feel! Using professional tools like the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, we saw some incredible shifts:

- Big Boosts: Our members saw an average positive jump of +3.49 in mental wellbeing!
- Confidence is Key: 18 women reported feeling much more confident in themselves.
- Handling the Hard Stuff: We saw a +0.49 gain in how our mums feel they can deal with life's problems.
- Finding Zen: Average scores for "Feeling Relaxed" went up by +0.43.

🎨 Skills & Smiles

- Creative Sparks: 11 women reported a major improvement in their creative skills after our 28 workshops.
- Instant Friends: 100% of our respondents said they met new people from different backgrounds or made brand-new friends!
- Looking Forward: 16 women told us they now feel much more optimistic about the future.

This project was more than just crafts—it was about thriving, not just surviving. A massive thank you to the The National Lottery Community Fund for helping us weave this beautiful social fabric!

#NewcastleMums #CommunityPower #WellbeingSuccess #SPLC #ICOS #MakingADifference
#newcastle #newcastleupontyne



The "Housing Support" Project:

The "Housing Support" project, funded by the Evan Cornish Foundation, was established to address a critical gap in advocacy for refugees and vulnerable migrants in Sunderland. As the number of individuals at risk of homelessness in the region increased dramatically over the last two years, ICOS provided intensive, one-on-one interventions to help clients navigate the complexities of the UK housing and benefits systems. By offering a bridge between crisis accommodation and long-term stability, the project achieved significant improvements in housing security and mental wellbeing.

Project Aims and Context

The primary objective was to provide expert advice and advocacy for migrant individuals affected by homelessness. We focused heavily on refugees who had recently been granted status; these

individuals often face a "move-on" period where they must vacate Home Office accommodation within a very short timeframe, often with no alternative accommodation available. Beyond refugees, the project supported vulnerable migrants displaced by domestic abuse or family breakdowns.

We successfully reached 24 individual clients, providing a depth of service that averaged 10 hours of support per person. This intensive engagement was necessary to overcome the significant administrative and systemic barriers our clients face.

Key Activities and Holistic Support

To achieve long-term stability, the project delivered a multi-layered support strategy:

Housing Advocacy: We assisted with housing applications, gathered evidence to update housing "banding" (priority status), and acted as a liaison with local authorities and social landlords such as Gentoo and Bernicia.

Immigration and Legal Links: As an organisation registered with the Immigration Advice Authority, we provided essential advice and partnered with experts like the North East Law Centre and Shelter for complex legal needs.

Essential Infrastructure: Support extended beyond the tenancy agreement, assisting clients with setting up bank accounts, SIM cards, and Universal Credit applications.

Creating a Home: Recognizing that a house is not a home without essentials, we helped clients apply for furniture, carpets, and appliances once tenancies were signed.

Measurable Impact

The project utilized the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) to track the psychological impact of housing stability.

Core Outcomes

New Homes Secured: 15 clients successfully found and moved into new properties.

Complex Case Resolution: 11 clients resolved issues regarding repairs, priority register placement, or direct advocacy.

Wellbeing Improvement: 63% (15 clients) reported a measurable increase in their total wellbeing scores.

Average Wellbeing Increase: The group's average total wellbeing score rose from 27.9 to 30.4.

Client Satisfaction: 93% of respondents rated the support an 8/10 or higher, with 79% giving a perfect 10/10 score.

Challenges, Learning, and Adaptations

The delivery period was marked by a challenging social and political climate for migrants in the UK.

Rising Hostility: We observed increased levels of verbal hate crime and racist rhetoric in the media. In response, ICOS met with the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria and shared case studies with the police to discuss better support for victims.

Systemic Barriers: Changes in eligibility for the Household Support Fund and restrictive family reunion policies have exacerbated mental health struggles among our clients.

Operational Pressures: Staffing shortages and a high volume of immigration queries tested our capacity. Consequently, we are working to increase our immigration regulation from Level 1 to Level 2 to handle more complex cases in-house.

Demographic Insight

The project reached a diverse and high-need cohort:

Gender & Age: The participants were almost entirely male (23 out of 24), with the majority falling into the 18–34 age brackets.

Nationality: The most common countries of origin were Sudan (9) and Yemen (6), followed by Eritrea, Afghanistan, Iran, and Congo.

Language Support: 50% of clients required an interpreter, with Arabic being the most common primary language spoken.

We would like to thank Evan Cornish Foundation for their generous funding.

Volunteer at Backhouse Park:

BACKHOUSE PARK CLEAN-UP

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!
HELP PROTECT OUR GREEN SPACE!**

EVERY MONDAY 10 AM - 12.20PM
EVERY FRIDAY 10 AM - 2.30PM

TASKS INCLUDE

Picking up litter | Keeping trails and paths clear
Clearing fallen leaves | Planting, trimming, pruning and weeding
Removing invasive weeds and vines | Clearing the stream



FOR MORE DETAILS EMAIL
DANIEL@ICOS.ORG.UK OR CALL 07783433674

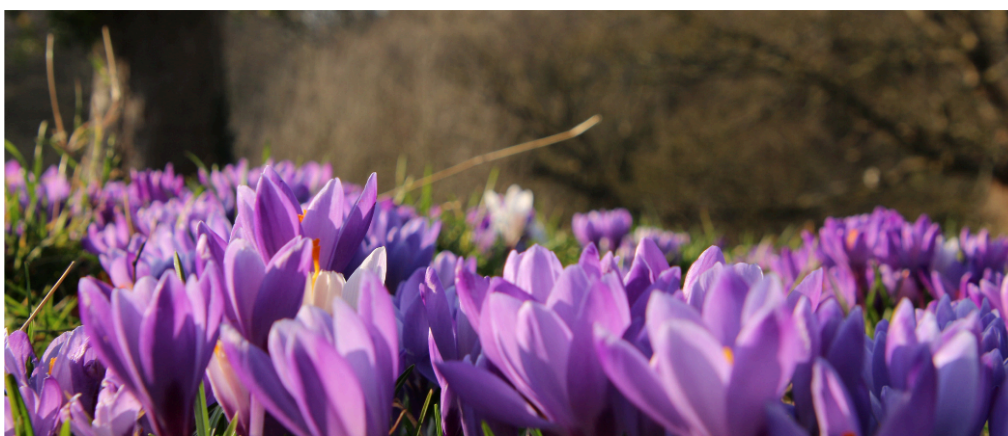


JOIN US! VOLUNTEER WITH EAST RANGERS & ICOS

HELP TAKE CARE OF THE BACKHOUSE PARK
AND MAKE IT A WELCOMING PLACE FOR
EVERYONE

RYHOPE ROAD, SUNDERLAND, SR2 2EF

CONTACT SAM@ICOS.ORG.UK
OR CALL 0785617778



Support ICOS:

Please consider donating to ICOS to support the work we do. Ways to donate can be accessed by the following link: <https://icos.org.uk/support-us/> or by clicking on the ICOS logo.





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