



Run by-and-for migrant people the International Community Organisation of Sunderland (ICOS) is a cornerstone of the Sunderland's social infrastructure, providing wide-reaching support to migrant communities; supports 600 migrant people/year through one-to-one support and advocacy with accessing benefits/housing/services and employment opportunities. About 2000/year benefit from activities such as wellbeing and less intensive projects.

By delivering high-impact projects like We Feel Safe, which supports people affected by modern slavery/exploitation, or ICOS Women, which focuses on Eastern European women, including those affected by domestic abuse, ICOS has supported thousands in navigating systemic barriers. With a 57% average increase in client wellbeing scores and a track record of transforming lives from exploitation to empowerment, and consistent measuring wellbeing, addressing the "unseen" trauma of exploitation, and fostering environmental pride.

By treating wellbeing as a key measure of progression, ICOS ensures that their support is not a "sticking plaster" but a sustained solution:

Recovery from Labour Exploitation. A Polish national was referred to ICOS after being held in debt bondage by a "gangmaster." He had no access to his ID and was suffering from severe dental pain and PTSD. ICOS provided a Polish-speaking caseworker who helped him recover his documents, access dentistry, and secure a safe house.

- **Outcome:** His mental wellbeing score increased by 60%. He is now in full-time, legal employment and has been debt-free for over a year.

Isolation to leadership. An Arabic-speaking woman arrived in Sunderland as a refugee. Isolated by language barriers, she suffered from debilitating anxiety. She joined the ICOS Women's Group for weekly yoga and English conversation sessions.

- **Outcome:** After 12 months, her confidence grew to the point where she began volunteering as a community translator for ICOS. She has now successfully secured a part-time role in a local school.

Crisis Intervention and stability. A family of four was facing immediate homelessness due to a processing error in their Universal Credit. The stress had led to a breakdown in the parents' relationship.

- **Outcome:** ICOS's advice team spent three months advocating with the DWP, eventually securing a £3,000 back-payment. With the financial pressure removed, the family stayed together and reported a massive improvement.

Combatting Men's Mental Health Crisis. A middle-aged man who had lost his job felt he had "no reason to get out of bed." He was invited to join the *ICOS Sports* futsal sessions.

- **Outcome:** "ICOS didn't just give me a game of football; they gave me a community."