



Happy May from ICOS!

International Community Organisation of Sunderland (ICOS) is a local charity dedicated to improving the quality of life for Black and Minoritized and migrant communities across the North East. We work to strengthen community cohesion and promote intercultural understanding.



ICOS
INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY
ORGANISATION
OF SUNDERLAND

Since 2011, ICOS has supported over 600 migrant people/year through one-to-one advice, advocacy, and guidance on housing, benefits, and employment. In addition, our community activities, training sessions, and wellbeing events bring people together- reaching more than 2,500 people annually.

Our mission is simple but powerful: to connect migrant people to opportunities, defend their rights, and bring communities together.

Many of those we support face significant challenges, including poverty, isolation, language barriers, domestic abuse, and financial hardship. ICOS provides vital support, helping people access their rights, find practical solutions, and rebuild their lives with confidence.

Our work creates real, measurable change: <https://icos.org.uk/our-impact/>

This is reflected in the voices of those we support:

“ICOS has helped me a lot. I joined English language classes and now I can communicate and understand much more. They also helped me with my CV, translating my certificates, and getting a statement of comparability.”

“Because of this support, I am now starting Accounting Level 1 at college and working towards returning to my profession. My English has improved and I feel ready to study further.”

“I received help with financial advice, benefits, transport to work, employment support, a CV, a food safety course, and English classes. ICOS supported me every step of the way.”

HELP US TO HELP MORE PEOPLE: <https://icos.org.uk/get-involved/>



Hello and welcome to the early May newsletter.

In this newsletter, we will share some exciting events coming up. We will also share an opportunity to work for ICOS (female only) and an opportunity to volunteer for ICOS.

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 52 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).
- Our one to one activities have engaged with 3 new clients, from countries such as Kuwait, Libya and Nigeria.

- 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.



Upcoming Events:

**Wellbeing Walk: Low Newton to
Beadnell**

Tuesday 26 May 2026

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

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



WELLBEING WALK

LOW NEWTON
→ BEADNELL
(~3 MILES)

Tuesday
26 May 2026

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.

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

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

- Free transport
- Free lunch

Logos: ICOS, Community Foundation North East, VONNE HEALTH & WELLBEING, NE North East Combined Authority, Northumbria Police & Crime Commissioner

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



Sea Glass Jewellery & Art session for women

Friday 15th of May
5pm - 7pm

Women only!

St. Michael's Community Centre
Sunderland
SR2 9JT

To book your space please send email to
katarzyna.zarebska@icos.org.uk

Logos: ICOS WOMEN, Stronger Shores

Seaham Trip for Women and Children

Saturday 09 May 2026

12:10pm @ ICOS, 14 Foyle Street,
Sunderland, SR1 1LE

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



T-Shirt Painting Workshop for Children and Women

ICOS WOMEN and the Mums' Club invite children and women to a T-shirt painting workshop.

The workshop will take place on

22 May 2026 from 5.15 pm to 7.15 pm at St. Michael's Community Centre, Stannington Grove,

SR2 9JT,

SUNDERLAND.



This event is free of charge. All materials are provided, and we also have cotton T-shirts available for children only. Adult women taking part in the workshop are asked to bring their own cotton T-shirts (98–100% cotton), which must be washed before painting using only washing powder or liquid detergent, without fabric softener. If you would like to paint your favourite character or drawing, please print your template on an A4 sheet (other templates will be provided) or contact Malgorzata by sending an email to the address below.

To secure your place, please send an email to malgorzata@icos.org.uk with the following information:

*how many people will be attending

*please specify the T-shirt size for the child

*if you have any questions

We'll make the time more enjoyable by savouring homemade cake with coffee, tea or water, courtesy of our sponsor, the Polish shop Foodland in Wallsend.

We look forward to seeing you so that we can create our personalised cotton T-shirts together.

You are warmly invited,

See you there!

🌿🎉 Family Fun Day at Backhouse Park! 🎉🌿

We're excited to invite you to a fantastic day of fun, laughter, and community spirit! Bring your own picnic blanket and join us for an afternoon packed with activities for all ages ❤️

📅 Saturday 6th June 2026

🕒 12PM – 3PM

📍 Backhouse Park, Ryhope Rd, Sunderland, SR2 2EF

🌟 What's on?

🎪 Magic show


🎈 Balloon modelling & face painting


🏆 Family games & sports


🎨 Arts & crafts workshops


🌍 Environmental activities




 Mindfulness & meditation


 Food & craft stalls

 Raffle & prizes

 Dress-up competition for children

 Register here (especially for the dress-up competition):

 <https://docs.google.com/.../1FAIpQLSexrAFAt2H.../viewform...>

 Questions or want to get involved?

Email: julia.wysocka@icos.org.uk

Get in touch if you'd like to volunteer or if you're interested in having a stall at the event

 ALL WELCOME!

Come along, bring your friends and family, and make some amazing memories 😊

#FamilyFunDay #SunderlandEvents
#CommunityEvent #BackhousePark
#FamilyTime



JOIN US AT ParkPlay

Make friends, have fun, play more!



Hendon ParkPlay

Come and play for free, every Saturday from
10am at Barley Mow Park

More info and register at
park-play.com/register



In partnership with:

Active
Sunderland



#MeetMovePlay

Stall Holders Wanted – Family Fun Day :

We are inviting stall holders to join our Family Fun Day on 6th June in Backhouse Park !

🕒 Time: 12:00 PM – 3:00 PM

📍 Please arrive earlier to set up your stall

If you would like to take part, you must provide your own table, and if you wish, you can also bring your gazebo.

In exchange for having a stall, we kindly ask for a donation for our raffle – this can be a product or a service.

⚠ Spaces are very limited, so please book your place as soon as possible!

📧 To apply, email:

katarzyna.zarebska@cios.org.uk

We look forward to hearing from you!

STALL HOLDERS
We'd love to have you at
FAMILY FUN DAY
IN
BACKHOUSE PARK

DATE: 6TH JUNE **TIME:** 12:00 PM – 3:00 PM **LOCATION:** BACKHOUSE PARK

We are inviting local businesses, crafters, charities and community groups to have a stall at our Family Fun Day!

TO TAKE PART, PLEASE:

1. PROVIDE YOUR OWN TABLE – OR – BRING YOUR OWN GAZEBO (IF YOU WISH)
2. DONATE AN ITEM OR SERVICE FOR OUR RAFFLE
Your donation will help make our event even more special!
3. PLEASE ARRIVE EARLIER to set up your stall before the event begins.

INTERESTED? GET IN TOUCH TO BOOK YOUR SPACE OR FOR MORE INFORMATION!

Let's make it a day to remember!

COME AND BE PART OF A FUN, FRIENDLY DAY FULL OF FAMILIES, ACTIVITIES, AND GREAT ATMOSPHERE!

Sunderland City Council **Durham Wildlife Trust** From Tees to Tyne **ICOS** **Refugee Week**

ICOS Women are Hiring:

Job Title: ICOS Women Project Worker (Female)

Contract Duration: Until 31st December 2027 (16 hours per week) – May be extended subject to funding

Hourly Rate: £13.45 per hour

Start Date: June 2026

Work Schedule: Flexible working hours, during office hours (9am-5pm Monday – Friday)



Role Description:

The project is focused on vital support for migrant women in Sunderland and the surrounding area.

You will provide reliable, holistic and proactive help, advice and guidance with accessing vital services to women who have been impacted by the cost-of-living crisis, such as housing, welfare benefits, employability and supporting women with reaching their long terms goals, empowering women, and supporting them with any barriers they might face. You will also be responsible for record keeping including, inputting data and recording details of appointments, outcomes and support provided using internal data management system.

The ICOS Women Project Worker will work closely with the Community Development Officer.

Person Specification Essential:

Candidates should possess the following skills and attributes:

- You should have excellent communication skills. With excellent literacy, numeracy and IT skills – including use of MS Office and email.
- Be committed to equality and diversity, and able to work with people from a range of different backgrounds
- Applicants should be empathetic
- Have excellent organisational and time keeping skills
- Friendly and approachable
- Interest in reducing inequalities faced by migrant women and have an understanding of challenges women might face with accessing services
- Ability to work both independently and as part of a team

Person Specification Desirable:

- A knowledge of one or more languages is desirable
- Casework/advocacy/advice experience preferred

Training and Support:

Successful candidates will receive free training in the following areas:

- Data management system (internal)
- Mandatory participation in Level 2: Safeguarding training, Equality and Diversity, and GDPR Training
- Domestic Abuse Training
- Mandatory: Level 2 Information, Advice and Guidance
- DBS check will be required
- Opportunity of being trained up as a Level 1 Immigration Advisor

Benefits of working for ICOS:

-Flexible hours to be agreed with you

-Opportunities to develop and grow through training and leadership

-Working as part of a friendly and supportive team

-Access to free counselling

-Paid breaks

-A progressive holiday package, with the number of paid holidays per year increasing with the with length of service

-We are a Living Wage Employer. Your salary will increase every year, at least with line with the living wage, as set as the Living Wage Foundation

How to Apply:

To apply for the ICOS Women Project Worker position, please send your CV and a covering letter explaining why you would like to be a project worker for the ICOS Women Project to:

Julia Wysocka – julia.wysocka@icos.org.uk

Deadline for applications: 12pm on 18/05/2026. No applications will be accepted after this point.

Interviews will be held week commencing: 25/05/2026

In case of any questions please contact Julia on 07942583833

We look forward to receiving your application!

Fundraiser:

We wanted to share a fundraiser for one of our former clients:

“Hi,

I don't really know how to start this anymore.

Ten months ago, my wife — still so young, just 44 — suffered a massive stroke. The doctors told me to prepare for the worst... that it was too severe, that she probably wouldn't make it. But she did. She survived. And since then, we've been living in a kind of fragile, painful hope, fighting every single day for even the smallest bit of progress.

I'm left alone most of the time with our 10-year-old son, who has ADHD and autism. I can't work anymore. Everything I had saved is gone — spent on hospital visits, transport, medication, and simply trying to hold things together.

We are in the UK with no real support system around us. It's just me and my son trying to survive each day. We still go to see Dominika twice a day, no matter how exhausted we are. We try to stay strong for her, to show her she's not alone — but it's getting harder and harder to keep going.

My son needs constant care and attention. Anyone who has raised a child with ADHD and autism knows it's not just exhausting — it's overwhelming in a way that never stops, not even for a moment. And now I'm doing it while carrying everything else on my shoulders too.

The hospital offered rehabilitation only once a week... and even that has barely happened this month. It feels like time is slipping away while we are just waiting, hoping, surviving.

Some days I feel like I'm disappearing inside all of this.

Thank you to anyone who even takes the time to read this. I wouldn't wish this kind of life on anyone.

Have a good day.”

You can donate via the following link: https://www.gofundme.com/f/at-the-physiotherapy?attribution_id=sl:1c8995e0-46ff-42e3-9eea-5eeba8fe2421&lang=en_US&ts=1777621130&utm_campaign=man_sharesheet_tip&utm_content=amp20_t1&utm_medium=customer&utm_source=whatsapp

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:

Help us win £1,000 when you shop with Tesco!

When you shop with Tesco through easyfundraising, Tesco donates to ICOS at no extra cost to you.

This month, shopping at Tesco gives us the chance to win £1,000!

It only takes a minute to sign up and make a difference with your everyday shopping.

Last chance to enter: 31 May

Please support and share with friends and family!

Please contact us on ghaydaa@icos.org.uk or on 07392957048 for any more information



The Migrant Health in Sunderland (MHS) Project:

The Migrant Health in Sunderland (MHS) project, delivered by the International Community Organisation of Sunderland (ICOS), has successfully concluded its intensive delivery period from October 2025 to March 2026. This initiative was established to dismantle the profound barriers—including language, digital exclusion, and systemic opacity—that migrant communities face when accessing healthcare and essential advice.

A Holistic Model for Complex Needs

The project's success was rooted in a unified, person-centred model that integrated high-intensity advocacy with a vibrant wellbeing programme. Supporting 74 individuals from 24 countries, the project served a cohort characterized by high complexity: 97% had limited English proficiency, and 70% had very substantive language barriers to navigate statutory services.

Substantive Individual Outcomes

The depth of engagement resulted in a 93% positive case resolution rate (comprising 54 fully and 15 partially resolved cases). Beyond resolving immediate crises, the project achieved measurable improvements in long-term stability and wellbeing:

Improved Mental Wellbeing: 59% of participants recorded higher scores on the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, with an average improvement of 1.48 points. Key gains

were seen in clients' ability to think clearly, deal with problems well, and feel optimistic about the future.

Financial and Housing Stability: The project secured seven benefit awards (such as PIP), resolved high-stakes energy billing disputes, and assisted eight clients with positive grant outcomes. Housing situation scores also saw an average improvement of 0.61 points.

Access to Rights and Justice: Advocacy led to restored healthcare access after previous denials, successful challenges to police investigation closures through the Victims' Right to Review, and the progression of critical compensation claims.

Reduced Isolation and "Place Orientation": Wellbeing activities—including beach walks, rowing, and coastal trips—helped participants feel a sense of belonging in Sunderland. For many, this was a vital "first step" into community life, with several individuals progressing into formal volunteering roles.

Intensive Advice and Advocacy

The advocacy provided was an enabling condition for support. Rather than "light-touch" signposting, the project delivered relational, time-intensive casework, with clients typically requiring five to six appointments per issue—often lasting up to two hours each. This dedicated support empowered individuals to navigate the NHS, immigration processes, and legal systems with confidence they otherwise would not have had.

A Legacy of Trust

The exceptional average client satisfaction score of 9.56 out of 10—with 80% of respondents awarding a perfect 10—reflects the deep trust established between ICOS and the community. This model has demonstrated that addressing the social determinants of health through a combination of practical resolution and social opportunity creates a robust pathway toward independence.

Acknowledgments

This transformative work was only possible through the generous support of our funders, whose investment allowed us to provide the intensive, specialized care required by our participants. We also extend our sincere gratitude to Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland (VCAS), and specifically author Carl Chapman, for their rigorous external evaluation. Their independent analysis has provided a vital evidence base that will inform our ongoing efforts to reduce health inequalities and foster migrant inclusion across the region.

We would like to extend our gratitude to Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE) for funding this important project.



Need Help Finding A Home:

Need support accessing safe, secure housing? Our project with Leeds Building Society helps migrants and refugees overcome the unique barriers to finding a home, from financial advice to advocacy against discrimination.

Don't wait. Reach out today for help.

Call/Text 📞 : 07482 941 484 Email

✉️ : oreoluwa@icos.org.uk

We are grateful to the Leeds Building Society Foundation for their generous funding.

Need Help Finding A Home

WHAT IS THE PROJECT ABOUT

The Leeds building society project supports migrants and refugees to access safe, secure housing by providing advice, advocacy, and help overcoming barriers such as homelessness, financial hardship, and discrimination.

HOW WE CAN HELP YOU

- Support migrants at risk of homelessness
- Improve access to safe and secure housing
- Increase financial stability
- Reduce barriers to housing services
- Improve wellbeing and safety

WANT TO JOIN OR ASK A QUESTION

oreoluwa@icos.org.uk
07482941484



We're going to 'amplify the incredible work' of this historic Sunderland community centre:

ICOS was mentioned in the Sunderland Echo. Read the full article [here](#).

Volunteer for ICOS:

Capture the moment and make a difference! 📷 ✨

We are looking for two creative Content Creation Volunteers to join our team in Sunderland! If you have a passion for photography, video, or social media and want to support your local community, we want to hear from you.

What you'll be doing:

Capture the Action: Take photos and videos during our vibrant community events.

Get Creative: Edit and upload engaging content to our social media platforms.

Meet Amazing People: Work alongside a diverse range of people, including refugees, asylum seekers, and community groups.

Explore: You'll work at various community venues across Sunderland, often outdoors.

Why join us?

Grow Your Skills: Gain experience in media while accessing training opportunities like First Aid and Safeguarding.

Expenses Covered: We value your time and will refund your travel expenses.

Build Your Portfolio: We provide certificates of completion and professional references to help your future career.

What we're looking for:

An interest in photography, video, or social media.

A willingness to learn and work in various weather conditions.

A commitment of 3-5 hours per week for at least 3 months.

Availability: Monday through Saturday (Mornings, Afternoons, or Evenings).

How to Apply

Ready to start creating? To apply, please send your CV and a short covering letter to:

Contact: Daniel Krzyszcak

Email: daniel@icos.org.uk

Phone: 0759 653 84 82.

Help us tell our community's story! 🌟

#SunderlandVolunteers #ContentCreation #Photography #VolunteerOpportunity
#CommunityImpact #SunderlandEvents #SocialMediaVolunteer



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

 **EAST RANGERS**
Clean and Green


ICOS

Nature
HUBS

Sunderland
City Council

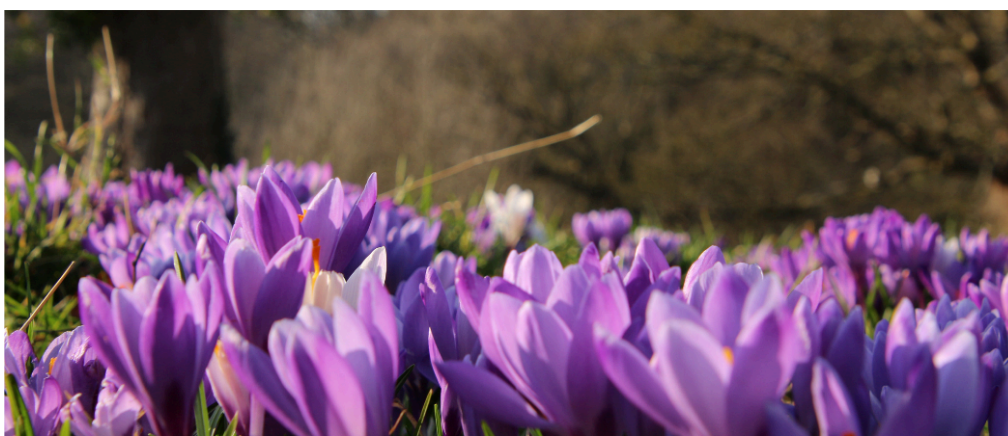


JOIN US! VOLUNTEER WITH EAST RANGERS & ICOS

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 07856177778



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.





[View email in browser](#)

Copyright © 2025 International Community Organisation of Sunderland. All rights reserved.

Reg. Number: 1186618

Office Tel: 07596538482

Email address: office@icos.org.uk

Want to change how you receive these emails?
[update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe](#)

