



# Happy June 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 June newsletter.

In this newsletter, we will share some exciting events coming up, two fundraisers and a case study highlighting the impact of our work.

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 60 queries, ranging from support with Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment (PIP), housing support, Pension Credit 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 3 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.



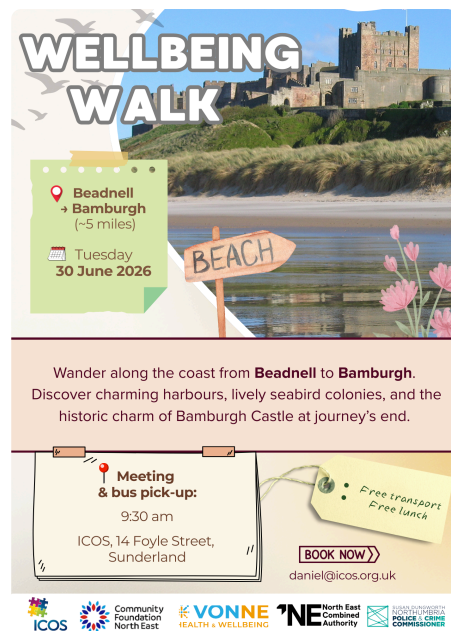
## Upcoming Events:

**Wellbeing Walk: Beadnell to  
Bamburgh**

Tuesday 30 June 2026

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

For booking, please contact  
[daniel@icos.org.uk](mailto:daniel@icos.org.uk)



**WELLBEING WALK**

📍 Beadnell  
→ Bamburgh  
(~5 miles)

📅 Tuesday  
30 June 2026

BEACH

Wander along the coast from **Beadnell to Bamburgh**.  
Discover charming harbours, lively seabird colonies, and the historic charm of Bamburgh Castle at journey's end.

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

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

## Women Only Brusho-Mandala Art Workshop

Friday 12 June 2026

5:30pm @ St Michael's Community  
Centre, Sunderland, SR2 9JT

For booking, please contact  
[katarzyna.zarebska@icos.org.uk](mailto:katarzyna.zarebska@icos.org.uk)



**BRUSHO-MANDALA ART WORKSHOP**

All materials provided

To book your place, send email to:  
[katarzyna.zarebska@icos.org.uk](mailto:katarzyna.zarebska@icos.org.uk)

12<sup>th</sup> of June, at 5:30pm  
St.Michael's  
Community Centre  
SR2 9JT

Women only!

Join our creative art workshop for women, relax & connect in a friendly atmosphere!

ICOS WOMEN WOMEN'S URGENT SUPPORT FUND COMMUNITY FUND SMALLWOODTRUST

## 🌿🎉 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/.../  
1FAIpQLSsexrAFAt2H.../viewform...](https://docs.google.com/.../1FAIpQLSsexrAFAt2H.../viewform...)

📩 Questions or want to get  
involved?

Email: [julia.wysocka@icos.org.uk](mailto: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



## Fundraising:

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](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)



This summer, four and a half years old Benjamin, our youngest fundraiser, will be taking on the muddy obstacle challenge in Northumberland alongside his mum and dad Daniel, to raise money for ICOS.

They'll be climbing, crawling, slipping, and splashing their way through the course to help support the incredible work ICOS does for families who need it most.

Every donation, no matter how small, will make a huge difference and mean the world to us.

If you'd like to support our little fundraiser, you can donate here:

<https://gofund.me/689fafceb>

If you would prefer to donate via bank transfer, please send us a message for details.

Please share this post and help us cheer on our amazing little mud runner!

#Fundraiser #ClartyBairns #ChallengeNorthumberland #ICOS #MudChallenge  
#FamilyFundraiser

## **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  
retailors 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

## **ICOS Women Presentation:**

Julia, our Community Development Officer delivered a well received presentation about ICOS Women (<https://icos.org.uk/icos-women/>) at yesterday's East Area VCSE meeting.

It was well received!

ICOS women is a safe space and offers advice, support, wellbeing and leadership opportunities for the women.

#womenempowerment #women #WomenSupportingWomen  
#womensrightsarehumanrights #womensurgentsupportfund



## **General Advice Case Study:**

Slawomir (name changed), a client originally from Poland, has been receiving ongoing support from ICOS due to difficulties navigating services in the UK as a result of a significant

language barrier. Although he is determined to manage his affairs independently, he often requires assistance understanding official correspondence, communicating with service providers, and accessing essential support.

One of the key areas where ICOS has supported Slawomir is with his Universal Credit claim.

When his housing costs changed, he needed to report the new information to the

Department for Work and Pensions. Due to language difficulties and uncertainty about the process, he sought assistance from ICOS. After obtaining the necessary documentation from his housing provider, we helped him submit the updated housing costs through his UniversalCredit journal, ensuring his claim remained accurate and up to date.

Slawomir has also needed practical support with everyday issues. On one occasion, he experienced problems with his mobile phone account after running out of internet allowance and was unable to resolve the issue himself. ICOS helped him understand his account and access the services he needed.

In addition, Slawomir faced ongoing difficulties with waste collection services. He had previously been approved for a replacement bin, but when it was delivered, the collection worker refused to hand it over, incorrectly believing that Slawomir already had a bin. This left him without the necessary waste disposal facilities. ICOS contacted the council on his behalf, followed up with the relevant department, and ensured that the matter was escalated to the refuse manager. We also arranged for a green bin to be ordered and delivered to his property.

During a period of financial hardship, Slawomir required emergency food support. ICOS successfully arranged a food bank voucher and explained the conditions of the service, including the fact that food bank assistance is intended as short-term crisis support due to high demand. This ensured that he received immediate help while understanding the limitations of the service.

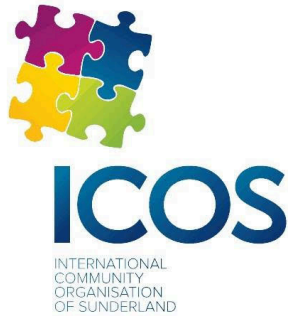
Housing was another significant concern. Slawomir had been waiting for more suitable accommodation and was anxious about the outcome of his housing application. ICOS maintained regular contact with his housing provider, Gentoo, to monitor the progress of his application and explain each stage of the process. Following property inspections and tenancy arrangements, Slawomir was successfully offered and moved into a new Gentoo flat. This represented a major positive outcome for him, providing greater housing security and improved living conditions. Throughout the process, ICOS helped him understand correspondence, liaised with the housing provider on his behalf, and ensured he was fully informed about the next steps.

Through ongoing support, advocacy, and practical assistance, ICOS has helped Slawomir overcome barriers created by language difficulties and has enabled him to access essential services, maintain his benefits, secure emergency support during a crisis, and successfully obtain more suitable accommodation. His case highlights the importance of tailored support for individuals who may struggle to communicate effectively with public services and service

providers, demonstrating how targeted intervention can lead to meaningful improvements

in a person's quality of life.

We are grateful to our funder- Willan Fund at Community Foundation North East for funding this essential work.



## **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](mailto: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



**The North East Anti-Racism Coalition (NEARC) is mentioned in the BBC:**

ICOS has proudly been part of the NEARC since the beginning. You can read the article here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c2k2e7d5qggo?fbclid=IwY2xjawSPI9JleHRuA2FibQIxMQBicmlkETBMbkh0QlpoT1IEOTNmWFRHc3>

## 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](mailto:DANIEL@ICOS.ORG.UK) OR CALL 07783433674

 **EAST RANGERS**  
Clean and Green

 **ICOS**

 **Nature  
HUBS**

 **Sunderland  
City Council**

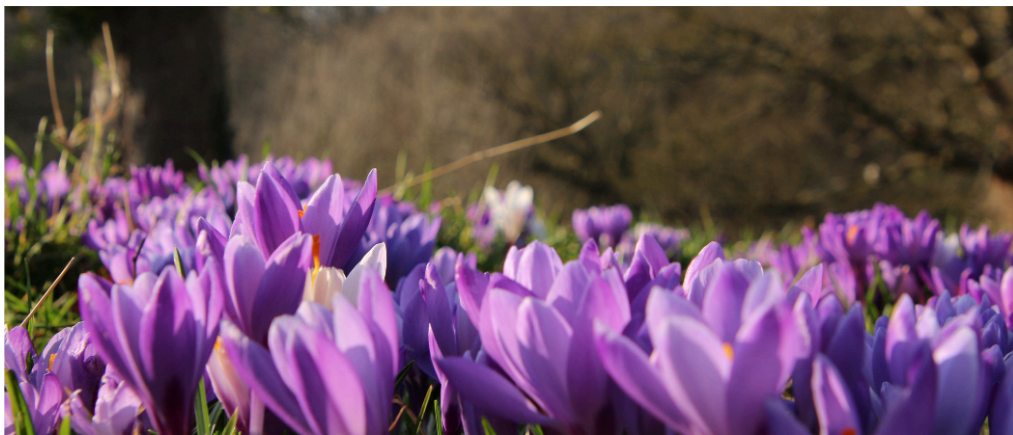


# JOIN US! VOLUNTEER WITH EAST RANGERS & ICOS

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](mailto: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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