



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 share updates from our Pieroginie Collective and from our City of Nature project.

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 89 queries, ranging from support with council tax support, support with Universal Credit, homelessness support, and Personal Independence Payment

(PIP), housing support and support surrounding employability (accessing employment and training).

- Our one to one activities have engaged with 1 new clients, from countries such as Poland.
- 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 10 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 26 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 walk with waves crashing against a rocky shore. The text 'WELLBEING WALK' is prominently displayed in large, green, block letters. Below the title, a map shows the route from 'LOW NEWTON' to 'BEADNELL' with a distance of '(-3 MILES)'. The date 'Tuesday 26 May 2026' is clearly marked. A 'Meeting & bus pick-up' section specifies the time as 9:30 am at ICOS, 14 Foyle Street, Sunderland. A 'BOOK NOW' button is provided with the contact email daniel@icos.org.uk. The poster also includes a list of benefits: 'Free transport' and 'Free lunch'. At the bottom, logos for ICOS, Community Foundation North East, VONNE HEALTH + WELLBEING, North East Combined Authority, and Northumbria Police & Crime Commissioner are visible.

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.

• Free transport
• Free lunch

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

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 30 May 2026

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

For booking, please contact Luca on
07385132052



The poster features a photograph of a person in a bright green jacket sitting on a tennis court. The text 'FREE FOR ALL' is at the top, followed by 'COMMUNITY TENNIS' in large, bold letters. Below this, it says 'MEET NEW PEOPLE HAVE FUN FEEL GOOD'. A call to action reads: 'Join our friendly tennis sessions open to all ages and abilities. No experience needed, just come along and enjoy!'. A table provides details on time, date, place, and booking. A note states 'equipment provided on site' and another says 'All sessions are accompanied by a mentor.' Logos for Active Sunderland and Community Foundation North East 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!

time and date	15.30-17.00 SATURDAY 30TH MAY
place	BARLEY MOW PARK HENDON
booking	LUCA 07385132052

equipment provided on site

All sessions are accompanied by a mentor.

Active Sunderland Community Foundation North East

Padel Tennis

Wednesday 03 June 2026

19:30 - 21:00 @ Thomsen Retail
Park, Unit 1 Wessington Way,

Sunderland, SR5 3FR

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

£5pp suggested donation



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



Wilder Sunderland

Tuesday 26 May 2026

10:30am - 12pm @ Community Shop, Fawcett Street, Sunderland, SR1 1SJ



🌿🎉 **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

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@icos.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**

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



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/689fajceb>

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

HELP & WIN

- 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

**SHOP ONLINE
SUPPORT ICOS
FOR FREE**

Shopping at Tesco this month
could help us win 1000£
Entry closes on 31 May 2026

sign up to
easy funding

choose ICOS
as your cause

shop as normal
at tesco

easy fundraising
for ICOS

ICOS

TESCO

The Pieroginie Collective Project:

The Pieroginie Collective project was built on a foundation of high-intensity participation and wide community outreach. Here is a breakdown of the key figures and the roles of those who made it happen:

Participant & Volunteer Engagement

Core Creative Group: The project supported 31 active participants (migrant women) who attended the bi-weekly creative sessions at St Michaels Community Centre. This group eventually evolved into the Pieroginie Collective, which has grown to 25 members who continue to lead the project's legacy.

Volunteer Contribution: The broader ICOS network, which supported the project, includes 113 volunteers, with a dedicated core of 30 regular volunteers. These individuals were instrumental in logistics, event management, and facilitating the "Community Feasts."

Target Groups: The initiative specifically engaged 51 women and 64 children across its various creative and wellness activities.

Public Reach & Events

The project exceeded all its initial outreach targets, bringing diverse groups together through high-profile public events:

Audience Size: Over 150 people attended the project's milestone events (The EXPO Pavilion and the Grand Community Feast).

Event Highlights: * The Grand Community Feast: At this final event, the collective prepared and served over 200 pierogies alongside an array of international dishes.

Partnerships: Collaboration was a key "force multiplier." By working with groups like FODI (Friends of Drop-In) and Threads in the Ground, the project tapped into established volunteer networks and reached a wider cross-section of Sunderland's population.

Measurable Social Impact

The numbers reflect a significant shift in community trust and social cohesion:

100% of project participants reported making new friends or meeting people from different backgrounds.

95% of event attendees felt an increased level of trust in their neighbors.

82% of participants reported a direct improvement in their personal sense of belonging within the city.

This high level of engagement demonstrates that while the core creative group was small and focused, the "ripple effect" of their work—through public feasts and exhibitions—reached hundreds of residents, fostering a more inclusive community environment.

We are grateful to Cultural Spring for funding the project.

Check out these beautiful moments from our journey! 📷 🍷

<https://icos.org.uk/.../Pieroginie-ICOS-Women-Community...>



Meet Shila & Dorinda:

At a recent women's coffee morning hosted by the Sunderland Bangladesh International Centre, Shila Laskar- Translator and Community Support Officer, and Dorinda Kealoha - City of Nature Officer, met with local BAME women to introduce the City of Nature Sunderland project. The session created a welcoming space for conversation, connection, and sharing ideas about nature, wellbeing, translating and community involvement.

The workshop is part of a wider programme currently being delivered with marginalised communities across Sunderland. City of Nature Sunderland is a partnership project between Durham Wildlife Trust and ICOS, aiming to help people reconnect with nature in ways that are meaningful to them and their communities.

During the coffee morning, Shila and Dorinda spoke with participants about their interests, experiences, and what they would like to learn through future workshops. The project is designed to listen to community needs first, ensuring activities are tailored around what people want and enjoy. Discussions included simple ways to appreciate nature closer to home, such as exploring local parks, caring for gardens and backyards, and learning what plants and flowers can help attract birds, bees, butterflies, and other wildlife.

The session encouraged women to share their ideas and cultural knowledge about gardening, food growing, cooking from land and outdoor spaces. By working together, City of Nature Sunderland hopes to support communities in restoring and enjoying local nature while creating opportunities for learning, wellbeing, and stronger community connections. We are aiming to provide other services to marginalised communities in the future according to their needs.

The National Lottery Community Fund - we are grateful for your funding, which has helped us to fund the #CityofNature project! Thank you to the Bangladeshi Centre and Durham Wildlife Trust.

#backhousepark #nature #communitysupport #community #InclusionMatters



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



Consulting/Liaison Work - Meet Sam & Shila:

Sam– Our East Ranger and Shila– our Project Worker working on the #CityofNature programme have been carrying out consultation and planning activities for upcoming nature-based sessions at Backhouse Park in Sunderland during the school holidays. The

aim of the activities is to encourage children to appreciate the nature around them and spend more time outdoors exploring their local environment. By planning fun and engaging sessions connected to wildlife, plants, and nature discovery, the project hopes to keep children occupied during the holidays, helping them fill their time with positive activities so they do not get bored at home.

The planned activities will give children the opportunity to learn about nature in creative and enjoyable ways while making new friends and building confidence outdoors. Sessions may include nature walks, wildlife spotting, simple gardening activities, arts and crafts using natural materials, and learning about the importance of protecting green spaces in their local community. Sam and Shila are looking forward to welcoming children and families to the activities and creating a fun, safe, and educational environment for everyone to enjoy during the school break.

#environment #nature #communityinvolement





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



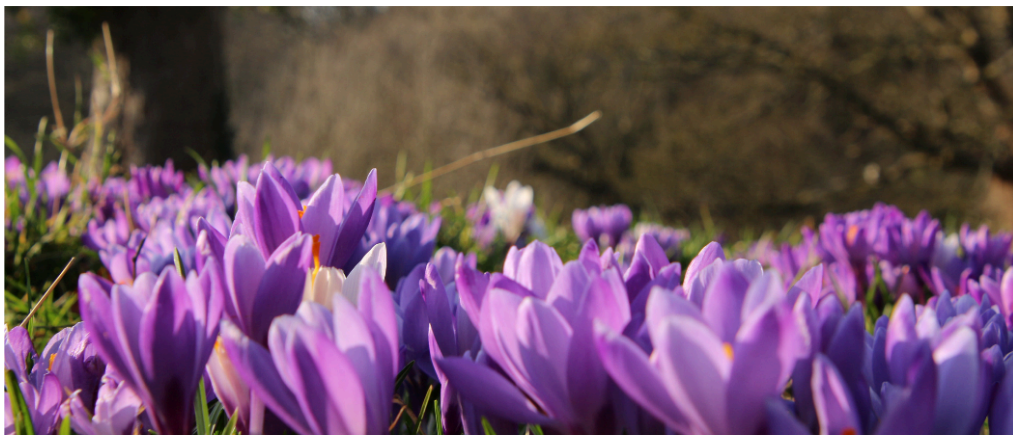


JOIN US! VOLUNTEER WITH EAST RANGERS & ICOS

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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