

Registered charity: 1186618 (England and Wales)



City & Guilds 1-to-1 Employability Support Project by ICOS
2026 – 2027



1. Executive Summary & Core Reach

The **City & Guilds 1-to-1 Employability Support Project**, delivered by the **International Community Organisation of Sunderland (ICOS)**, provided intensive 1-to-1 employability assistance, accredited skills training, holistic casework, and material support to migrant residents facing complex barriers in Sunderland. Over the 12-month delivery period, the project achieved exceptional outcomes across employment placements, training entry, financial stability, and personal well-being.

We worked with migrant people in Sunderland, facing complex barriers to employment, such as a modern day slavery (<https://icos.org.uk/back-in-control/>), domestic abuse, or refugees recently granted status. It will support them into work, education, training and volunteering through one-to-one support with job searching, applying for jobs, CV writing, and interview preparation, such as help with travel arrangements, and support with applying for benefits in order to avoid destitution when they are looking for work. Clients received 1 intensive support hours/3-5 meetings, 3+ months, with some work being done in between the meetings by the worker and the client (e.g., researching jobs, job applications). The project worker and the client will spend most of the initial meeting on understanding the skills/assets/aspirations, and individual barriers the client faces, and creating a plan of action- e.g., improving English language skills, certification of overseas qualifications, or accessing courses/training/qualifications.

Such integrated, wrap-around solutions are recommended when supporting refugees (<https://www.ippr.org/articles/making-it-work-refugee-employment-in-the-ukworking-paper-2-of-the-asylum-and-migration-working-paper-series>) other migrants.

Staff with lived experience delivered the project, which enabled ICOS to provide responsive support and increase the levels of trust amongst migrant people in need of employability support.

Summary of Agreed Objectives vs. Actual Achievements

- **Participants Supported:** Target/Total reached of **65 participants** across **238 sessions** and **418 hours of direct delivery**.
- **Clients Progressing into Employment:** **19 clients** entered work (**50.0%** of exit survey respondents).
- **Clients Progressing into Training & Education:** **22 clients** entered education or vocational training (**59.5%** of exit respondents).
- **Clients Achieving Qualifications:** **22 clients** achieved formal qualifications.
- **Clients Increasing Knowledge & Skills:** **29 clients** reported measurable skill gains.
- **Holistic Life Improvements:** **18 people** improved their financial situation, **18 people** increased confidence/wellbeing, **17 people** improved their housing situation, and **11 people** improved their feeling of safety.
- **Client Satisfaction:** Average rating of **8.9 / 10** (**100%** of participants rated the service as at least 7/10).

2. Participant Demographics & Baseline Profile

Demographic tracking highlights a diverse, highly educated migrant cohort navigating initial UK entry barriers:

Demographics & Status

- **Gender:** 70.3% Male (45), 28.1% Female (18), 1.6% Unspecified (1).
- **Age Distribution:** 25–34 years (**41.2%** / 21), 35–44 years (**33.3%** / 17), 45–54 years (**13.7%** / 7), 16–24 years (**11.8%** / 6).
- **Immigration Status:** Refugees (**28.1%** / 18), International Students (**26.6%** / 17), Asylum Seekers (**21.9%** / 14), Spouse Visa (**6.3%** / 4), EU Settled Status (**4.7%** / 3), Others (**12.5%** / 8).
- **Origins & Spoken Languages:** Participants originated from 25 countries (led by Nigeria [12], Ghana [9], Sudan [6], Afghanistan [4], Eritrea [4], Namibia [3]) and spoke 15 languages (led by English, Arabic, Pashto, Polish, Amharic, Persian, Kurdish).

Educational Mismatch & Barriers

- **High Educational Attainment:** **65.5%** held higher education qualifications (39.3% Bachelor Degree/Post-Graduate Diploma; 26.2% Master's Degree or higher).
- **Initial Status:** **65.6% (42)** were unemployed at registration. Key barriers included visa work restrictions (20 hr/wk student limits), asylum seeker shortage-occupation rules, language gaps, lack of UK work experience, and lack of local certification.

3. Distance Travelled & Consolidated Impact Data

Outcome Domain	Total Reached / Sampled	Number Improved	% Improved / Achievement	Key Details & Baseline Progression
Secured Employment	38 (exit)	19	50.00%	Roles in Care/Healthcare, Warehousing, Cleaning, Security, Catering.
Education & Training	37 (exit)	22	59.46%	Progression to ESOL, CSCS, Food Hygiene, SIA, Teaching Assistant.

Outcome Domain	Total Reached / Sampled	Number Improved	% Improved / Achievement	Key Details & Baseline Progression
Achieved Qualifications	65 (total)	22	33.85%	Accredited certifications gained across vocational sectors.
Knowledge & Skills	65 (total)	29	44.62%	Gained IT, job search, interview, and language skills.
Financial Situation	33 (survey)	18	54.55%	Average score increased from 4.39 \$\rightarrow\$ 5.30 (+0.91).
Mental Well-Being (SWEMWBS)	29 (survey)	18	62.07%	Transformed score increased from 25.06 \$\rightarrow\$ 27.19 (+2.13).
Housing Situation	32 (survey)	17	53.13%	Average score increased from 6.34 \$\rightarrow\$ 7.28 (+0.94).
Feeling Safe	32 (survey)	11	34.38%	Increased safety and community stability.



ICOS

PROJECT IMPACT & PARTICIPANT PROGRESS: CITY & GUILDS 1-TO-1 EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT



Data for migrant people in Sunderland across 12 months

OVERALL PROGRESS



QUALIFICATIONS & SECTORS



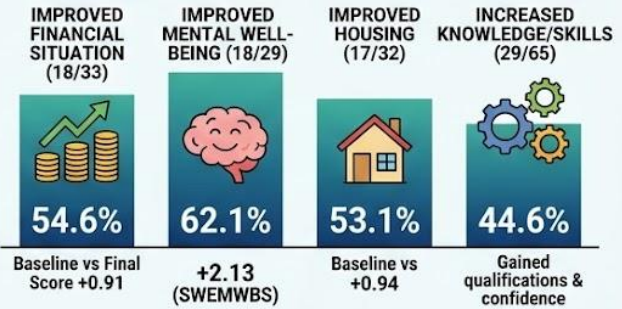
ACCREDITED CERTIFICATIONS



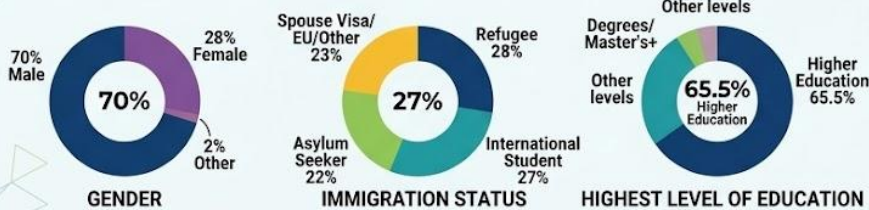
JOB ROLES SECURED (non-STEM)



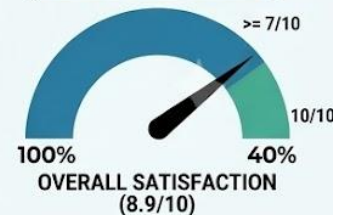
DISTANT TRAVELLED (KEY WELLBEING & SKILL SHIFTS)



PARTICIPANT PROFILE (AT REGISTRATION)



CLIENT FEEDBACK





4. Participant Voice & Qualitative Quotes

"I have received immense support from ICOS from employability to material support. I am now independent in job search and applications which I could not do before I came to ICOS."

"Training experience from healthcare has helped me a lot. Career counselling received from ICOS helped me be calm and adjust to life and work in the UK. CV prepared by ICOS helped me land an interview and induction with a healthcare agency."

"ICOS has supported me, now I am relaxed and really appreciate the effort from ICOS. I have faith in ICOS, and I believe that in my bad days there will be an organisation that can support."

"Support received from ICOS was great. I am able to search for jobs on my own. Career advice received from ICOS was very enlightening."

5. Detailed Case Studies

☐ Case Study 1: Lexi

Background & Initial Barriers: Lexi is a refugee who initially presented to ICOS alongside her husband. She had no CV, lacked internet access, and required urgent material support.

Support & Interventions:

- **Holistic Support:** ICOS provided SIM cards with data, referred her husband and four children for clothing and essential supplies, and arranged interview attire via Smart Works Newcastle.
- **Tailored Employability & Training:** Project workers created two distinct CVs (Teaching Assistant and Healthcare Assistant). Lexi completed Safeguarding training and signed up for the iDEA programme.
- **Job Applications & Interview Coaching:** ICOS guided Lexi through online applications, arranged interview preparation sessions to practice difficult questions, and provided technical support to navigate e-learning portals.

Outcomes & Progression:

- Lexi initially secured a healthcare role and completed her onboarding e-learning.
- When domiciliary care proved difficult to balance, ICOS updated her CV, registered her with AK Teaching Agency, and refined her cover letters.
- **Final Achievement:** Lexi secured her ideal role as a **Teaching Assistant** and successfully resumed employment in education.

☐ Case Study 2: Ricardo

Background & Initial Barriers: Ricardo, a Sudanese refugee, faced multiple systemic barriers to integration, including English language difficulties, long-term unemployment, and a lack of recognized UK qualifications.

Support & Interventions:

- **Language & IT Infrastructure:** ICOS enrolled Ricardo in ESOL classes and provided daily access to laptops and internet at the ICOS office so he could complete warehouse training with B2W.
- **Active Job Search & Application Guidance:** Project workers helped him set up accounts on Gov.uk, MTREC, and Universal Credit job portals, guiding him through applications for cleaning, warehouse, and factory roles.
- **Mentorship & Resilience:** When Ricardo failed an assessment during an initial warehouse induction at another firm, the project worker provided ongoing support and encouragement, immediately helping him re-apply elsewhere.

Outcomes & Progression:

- Ricardo gained basic IT, digital application, and job-search skills, eventually updating his own CV independently.
- **Final Achievement:** Ricardo was invited to apply to **Amazon**, passed the selection process, and was successfully hired.

6. Main barriers and issues when delivering the project:

Wider systemic issues affecting progression- there is not enough flexibility within the different systems which affects our clients- especially the current immigration system. More flexibility is needed- e.g., many clients were facing immigration status constraints such as short term postgraduate visas, or impossible minimum salary thresholds.

Outcomes and impact- more clients have definitely experienced the above changes, but we have been unable to follow up with a high proportion of clients- about 1/3, including those who had previously told us about their achievements and improvements due to them moving or changing their contact details. Our clients are facing multiple complex challenges, including destitution, the experience of being exploited and/or having to claim asylum in the UK. Some often change contact details for security reasons, or when they get a new sim card after running out of credit.