



We Feel Safe Case Study 1 – Anna from Poland

Anna (name changed) is originally from Poland and approached ICOS as a victim of workplace exploitation. Due to a language barrier, limited knowledge of her rights, and difficult working conditions, she experienced ongoing problems in her employment which were negatively affecting her physical health, mental wellbeing, and financial stability. She reported discriminatory comments at work, as well as significant difficulties commuting to her workplace, particularly during night shifts.

ICOS provided intensive employability and welfare support to improve Anna's situation. A new professional CV was created and uploaded online to help her search for alternative employment opportunities. Together, we applied for several suitable vacancies, including cleaning operative and production operative roles. We also assisted Anna in creating a profile and completing an application through the Greggs Careers website. Anna was shortlisted for an interview, demonstrating increased employability and confidence, although she later declined the role because it only offered part-time hours and would not provide sufficient financial stability.

ICOS also supported Anna with her social housing application. We uploaded employment evidence and liaised with her employer to obtain a detailed confirmation letter that met the housing association's requirements. As a result of this support and advocacy, Anna's housing priority increased and she was successfully awarded Band 2 status, significantly improving her chances of securing more suitable accommodation. She continues actively bidding for a new property.

Due to sickness absence and financial difficulties, Anna was struggling to manage her debts. ICOS contacted one of her creditors on her behalf and successfully negotiated a temporary freeze on repayments while she remained off work sick. To further reduce financial hardship, we also provided £150 in Aldi food vouchers during her sick leave period.

Health-related support formed another important part of the intervention. Anna initially experienced barriers accessing appropriate healthcare support because she was only offered a telephone GP appointment despite language difficulties. ICOS helped her secure a face-to-face GP appointment together with a Polish interpreter, ensuring she could properly explain her health concerns. Following the appointment, Anna received a fit note recommending work adjustments. We also contacted the GP practice again to arrange a Polish interpreter for her next appointment to ensure continued access to healthcare.

As a result of the fit note and ongoing advocacy, Anna's supervisor finally addressed her concerns regarding workplace difficulties and health issues. Operational adjustments were introduced at work to help improve her commuting arrangements and reduce some of the pressures associated with night shifts. ICOS additionally explained how her sick pay and Universal Credit entitlement would work during her sickness absence, helping her better understand her financial situation and reducing anxiety.

Overall, the support provided by ICOS helped stabilise Anna's financial circumstances, improve her access to healthcare, increase her housing priority, and strengthen her employment prospects. Although she continues to seek more suitable housing and employment, important progress has been achieved in improving both her wellbeing and long-term stability.