

# INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY ORGANISATION OF SUNDERLAND



# ICOS

INTERNATIONAL  
COMMUNITY  
ORGANISATION  
OF SUNDERLAND

ADVOCATING FOR RIGHTS, CREATING OPPORTUNITIES.





# INTRODUCTION

ICOS supports Minority Ethnic communities, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers across Sunderland and surrounding areas.

Our aim is to:

- Improve quality of life and promote equal opportunities
- Help people access information, advice, and essential services
- Build confidence, independence, and community inclusion
- Provide support in times of crisis and prevent future challenges

We connect people to opportunities, defend their rights and bring people from different cultural backgrounds together

Advice and Advocacy work (individual casework)

Volunteering opportunities

Cultural activities





# ICOS in 2009/10

- First events - July and September 2009
- First Advice and Advocacy appointments started in June 2010
- Registered as a charity in May 2011
- We started with £2000 in our account, a board of 7 people, about 10 volunteers
- Supported around 150 people/year (and had about 200 members)

# ICOS in 2025/26

- We are supporting 848 people and have over 2000 members
- 6 board members, 11 staff and 125 volunteers





# Our Areas of Impact

- 
- A group of people, including men, women, and children, are hiking on a grassy hill. They are wearing various outdoor gear like backpacks and hats. In the background, there is a clear view of the ocean under a blue sky with some clouds. The scene is bright and sunny.
- Advice & Advocacy
  - Wellbeing & Health
  - Empowerment & Digital Inclusion
  - Environment & Community Action
  - ICOS Women



# WORKSTREAM:

## ADVICE AND ADVOCACY

Supporting people through crisis, overcoming barriers, and building pathways to stability, independence, and inclusion.

Key areas of support:

- Housing and homelessness prevention
- Benefits and financial support
- Immigration and access to services
- Safety and crisis support
- Advocacy and representation

General advice funded by Links for life  
Leeds housing project funded by Leeds building society  
City and Guild  
Awards for all National lottery and Community foundation

**44%**

78 out of 177 people improved  
Housing Situation

**37%**

105 out of 279 people improved  
Financial situation

**31%**

62 out of 198 people reported feeling safer

**80**

people received material support  
(food vouchers, SIM cards, clothing)



# WORKSTREAM: EMPOWERMENT

**Creative Lives Project – Access Foundation**

Building the skills necessary for modern life and future employability.

We empower people to develop the confidence, skills and knowledge needed to participate fully in society. Through digital support, community groups and creative activities, we help people overcome barriers, build connections and create opportunities.

**65%**

**21 out of 32 people gained digital confidence**

**62%**

**5 out of 8 people improved their digital skills**

## **Specialist Groups**

**Successful engagement through "Mum's Club" and "Women's Group" enhanced creative and social skills.**



# WORKSTREAM: ICOS WOMEN

## ICOS Women Project – Smallwood Trust Urgent Support Fund



Empowering women, building confidence and creating leaders

- Established in 2019 as the first Eastern European women's group of its kind in the North East, ICOS Women has grown into an inclusive space open to all women and children.

We provide:

- Women's groups & Mum's Club
- Safe spaces for women and families to connect and support one another.
- Activities & learning opportunities
- Arts, crafts, sports, wellbeing, STEM, environmental activities, trips and workshops.
- Tailored one-to-one support
- Support with financial hardship, discrimination, domestic abuse, safety planning and access to services.

### SUPPORT YOU CAN GET THROUGH THE PROJECT:

- ✓ Wellbeing support through attending activities
- ✓ One-to-one advice and guidance
- ✓ Community Leadership and volunteering
- ✓ Participation in co-designed research projects
- ✓ STEM employability and skills support
- ✓ Safety interventions



The background of the entire slide is a collage of various community activities. On the left, there are photos of children and adults at an Easter event, with one child holding a 'KEEP GOING' sign and another holding a decorated egg. On the right, there are photos of women and children engaged in creative workshops, with one woman smiling and another child holding a piece of paper. The collage is overlaid with a semi-transparent yellow filter.

# WORKSTREAM: ICOS WOMEN

**23**

**Creative workshops delivered**

**36%**

**Improved skills through Women's Groups**

**17**

**Volunteers supporting activities**

**55%**

**Improved creative skills**

**110 women and 74 children engaged in our activities**

**Project Steering Group grew from 8 to 12 members**



# WORKSTREAM: ENVIRONMENT

## East Rangers project

Connecting people, communities and nature  
Through environmental activities.  
we create opportunities for people to improve  
wellbeing, build skills, connect with others, and  
take pride in their local environment.



**50**

**Environmental activity days delivered**

**50+**

**Adults and children participated in  
environmental activities**



# WORKSTREAM:

## WELLBEING AND HEALTH

We support people to improve their mental and physical wellbeing through accessible activities, social connection, and opportunities to build confidence and belonging.

Our work includes:

Wellbeing activities

Coastal walks, sports, outdoor activities, creative sessions and community events.

Reducing isolation

Creating safe spaces where people can connect, build friendships and feel part of the community.

Building resilience

Supporting people to improve confidence, cope with challenges and improve their quality of life.

ICOS activities

ICOS Sports Projects and activities

ICOS Women Project and activities

51%

171 out of 331 people improved their mental wellbeing

41%

135 out of 329 people improved their physical health

32%

106 out of 330 people improved to think clearly

38%

128 out of 330 are dealing with problems well

30+

Wellbeing sessions activities delivered including kayaking, snowboarding, tennis and coastal walks provided vital social reintegration.



# OUR IMPACT BEYOND SERVICES



Many of our clients take part in several activities or access several types of support



We serve as an access point and we make mainstream services and opportunities accessible to migrant people- from good jobs to healthcare or housing



From transition to safety, stability and empowerment



We are trusted



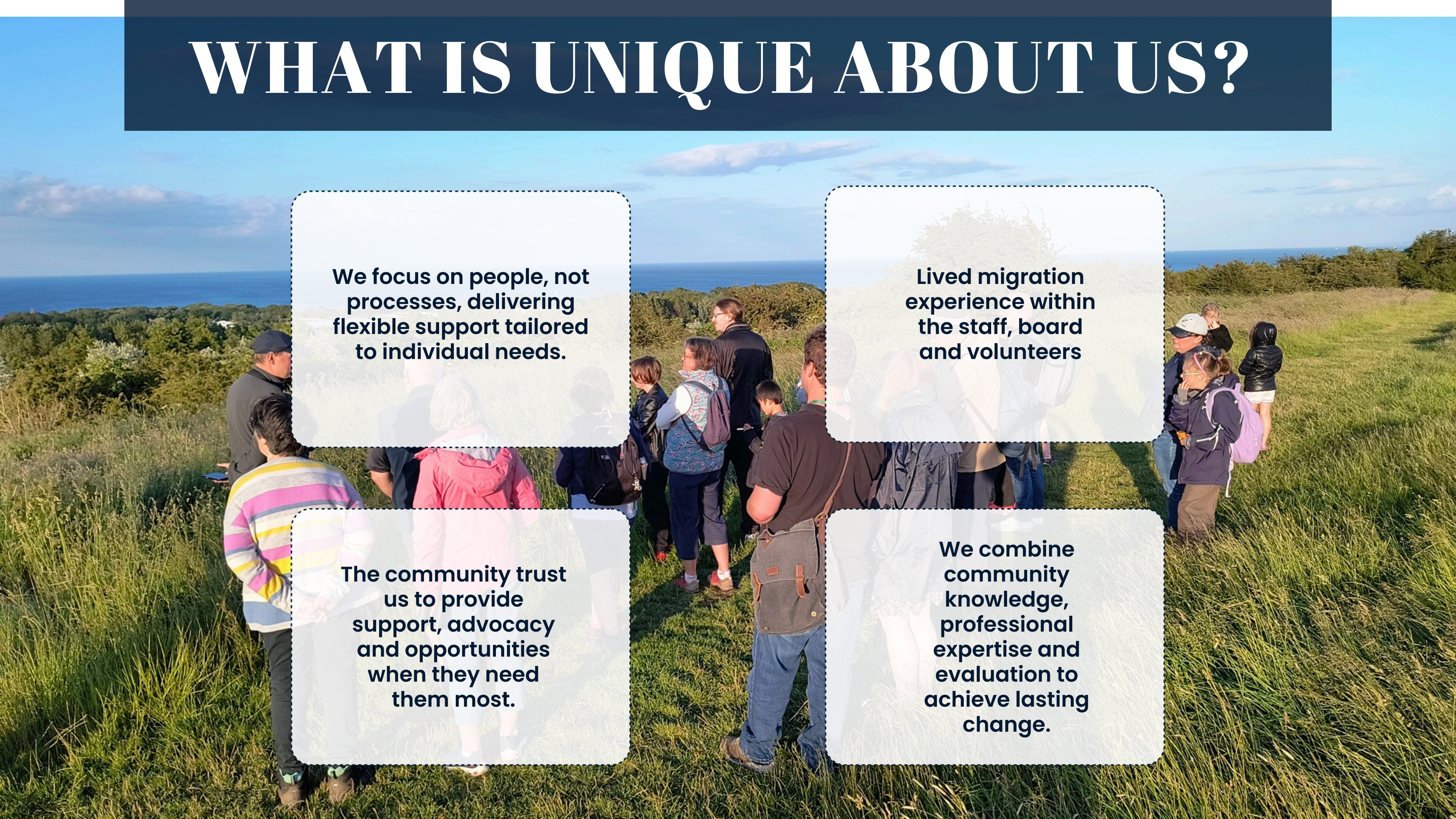
# WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT US?

**We focus on people, not processes, delivering flexible support tailored to individual needs.**

**Lived migration experience within the staff, board and volunteers**

**The community trust us to provide support, advocacy and opportunities when they need them most.**

**We combine community knowledge, professional expertise and evaluation to achieve lasting change.**





# RECOGNITION, CERTIFICATION AND AWARDS



**The Best BME Community Outreach Initiative 2025  
– North East award by SME News**



**Health and Wellbeing Award – Sunderland Black  
and Minority Ethnic Network – 2025**



**The Backhouse East Rangers project received The  
Campaign or Project of the Year award 2022 from the  
Sunderland University Student Union (award for  
providing meaningful volunteering opportunities for  
students).**



**Charity Excellence Quality Mark for 2022**



**April 2021, Living Wage Employer.**



**Tyne and Wear Citizen's Deep  
Listening Award for 2021**



**North East Charity Awards 2021  
– Finalist in the Uniquely North East Category**



**Sunderland BME Network One Voice Community  
Awards 2015 : Volunteer Recognition Award Highly  
Recommended, Employer Contribution Award,  
Individual Contribution Award Community Energy  
Seeds Fund Award 2015**





# CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

- Funding- competition, lack of EU funding, rising costs/inflation.
- Mismatch between need and external funding priorities
- Negative narratives about migrants and migration- and racism
- Communication
- Low resources within the community/social capital
- Demographic change

**Continuing our journey requires sustainable funding to grow our impact and reach more people in need**





# THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS AND SPONSORS!





# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS!





# VISION FOR THE FUTURE



**Growing Our Services**

**Financial Sustainability**





THANK  
YOU!