*Charity registered in England and Wales number 1186618*

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***Foreword:***

*On behalf of ICOS leadership, I want to express my deepest gratitude to our financial supporters for standing by us during a year that was both demanding and highly successful. My sincere thanks go out to every funder, donor, and sponsor, your crucial financial contributions keep our mission alive, as even the strongest organizations cannot operate without your help. Our goal remains empowering our clients to adapt, connect with essential resources, and flourish. We are equally thankful to our community for giving back so generously, with special appreciation to our volunteers and those who share feedback to help us grow more impactful and inclusive.*

**Rafal Marzec,**

**Chairperson**

## The tustees report- the ICOS Impact Report. 01 April 2025 – 31 March 2026.

### Executive summary

ICOS has directly delivered vital support to about 2500 migrants in North East of England, primarily in Sunderland. This includes 848 people supported by our needs- tailored one-to-one advice and advocacy helped individuals, particularly refugees and survivors of trauma, navigate critical issues such as housing, benefits, immigration, and employment during highly vulnerable transition periods.

Our work spanned crisis intervention and prevention, providing pathways into education, employment (including STEM), and volunteering. We tackled barriers such as language, digital exclusion, childcare, and transport. We have also delivered intercultural activities and arts and crafts.

Beyond individual support, ICOS fostered community resilience through wellbeing and sports activities, women's groups, environmental action, and leadership training. Through projects like Back in Control 2, we empowered migrants to influence policy, build partnerships, and

co-produce services. ICOS also expanded its immigration advice capacity and advanced plans for financial sustainability through social enterprise.

Together, these efforts have created lasting change, building stronger, safer, and more inclusive communities while amplifying migrant voices and strengthening local systems to better meet their needs.

We have provided one-to-one support to migrants on issues such as accessing benefits, applying for housing, and handling official correspondence (e.g., from schools, the NHS, or government bodies like council tax letters). This work connects migrants- particularly newly granted refugees- to essential services and entitlements. Many clients are at a critical transition point, with only 28 days to leave asylum accommodation and apply for mainstream support. This period often coincides with their first opportunity to seek employment in the UK, creating immense pressure as they also cope with separation from loved ones and adapting to a new country. Several clients are survivors of state oppression, torture, or have experienced modern slavery, domestic abuse, workplace exploitation, or hate crime. We have also supported economic migrants, students, and families, many of whom face intersectional disadvantages, such as women from deprived areas facing both gender and racial discrimination.

Our advice and advocacy work spans both prevention (e.g., helping families to secure immigration status for their children) and crisis intervention (e.g., homelessness support). Alongside this, we offer comprehensive employability support, including job applications, CVs, cover letters, interview prep, verifying foreign qualifications, and enrolling in courses or training—particularly English language classes. We also help with practical barriers like transport and childcare. Many clients lack familiarity with the UK labor market, making this tailored support essential to avoid exclusion. Our staff also help clients meet Universal Credit requirements, preventing sanctions that could hinder their job search.

We support both unemployed clients and those seeking better opportunities. Notably, migrant women have accessed STEM-related training and employment. A rising challenge is overreliance on AI-generated job applications, which many clients struggle to assess due to language barriers or unfamiliarity with UK norms. We address this through guided, personalised support.

Beyond advice and advocacy, our work extends to community wellbeing and development:

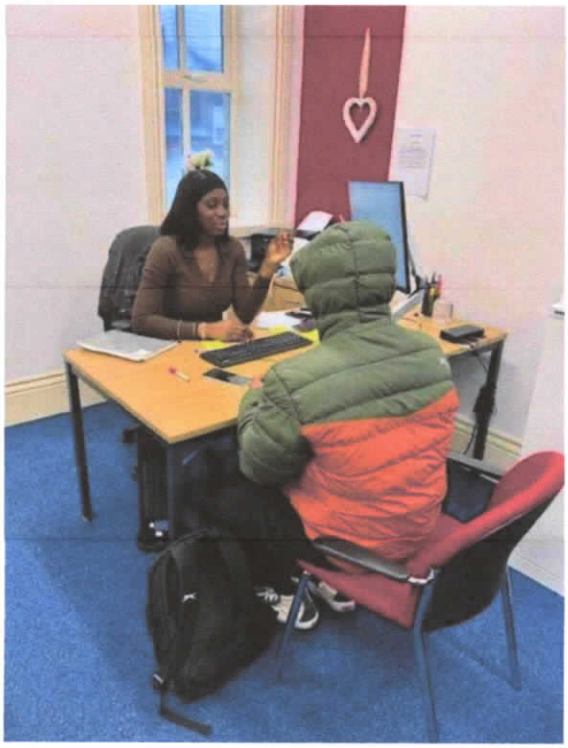
- **Safe spaces for women**, especially Eastern European migrants, through the ICOS Women project and Mums Club.
- **Wellbeing and sports activities** through ICOS Sports, co-designed by participants, encouraging engagement and positive outcomes.
- **Support for survivors of modern slavery** via access to entitlements, counselling, and legal advice (in partnership with Impact North East CIC).
- **Environmental projects**, especially in Sunderland's Backhouse Park, including clean-ups, tree planting, and awareness sessions.
- **Volunteering opportunities** in administration, events, communication, and environmental work—helping migrants develop skills and gain experience.

- **Social and intercultural events** that foster community connection across diverse backgrounds.
- **Policy influence through research**, often co-produced with migrants, and strategic advocacy.
- **Empowerment initiatives** that enable migrants to become council candidates, governors, board members, or community leaders, improving service responsiveness to migrant needs.

We have continued to be guided by our clients' needs and feedback and this year, we again sought their views through the annual survey, having already incorporated last year's feedback into current work. We have also worked closely with the ICOS – Wide Project Steering Group (PSG) to shape our delivery and ensure access.

**Impact:**

We have worked with about 25000 people - 848 of them have benefitted from individual support and the rest from less intensive forms of support, such as wellbeing activities. Many might not have registered at large events.



**1- Wellbeing and Health**

The programme reached the largest number of people in this category, providing a foundation of psychological and physical stability.

- **Mental Wellbeing**: 171 out of 331 people improved (51.66%)
- **Physical Health Recovery**: 135 out of 329 people improved (41.03%)
- **Thinking Clearly**: 106 out of 330 people improved (32.12%)

- **Dealing with Problems Well**: 128 out of 330 people improved (38.79%)

### 2- Advocacy and Essential Stability

These outcomes represent the "safety net" work involving housing, money, and personal security.

- **Housing Situation**: 78 out of 177 people improved (44.07%)
- **Financial Situation**: 105 out of 279 people improved (37.63%)
- **Feeling Safe (Current Situation):** 62 out of 198 people improved (31.31%)

### 3- Empowerment and Confidence

Focused on building self-efficacy and the ability to navigate social and professional environments.

- **General Confidence**: 55 out of 119 people improved (46.22%)
- **Creative Skills (Mums Club/Projects):** 34 out of 62 people improved (54.84%)
- **General Skills (Women's Group)**: 27 out of 75 people improved (36.00%)

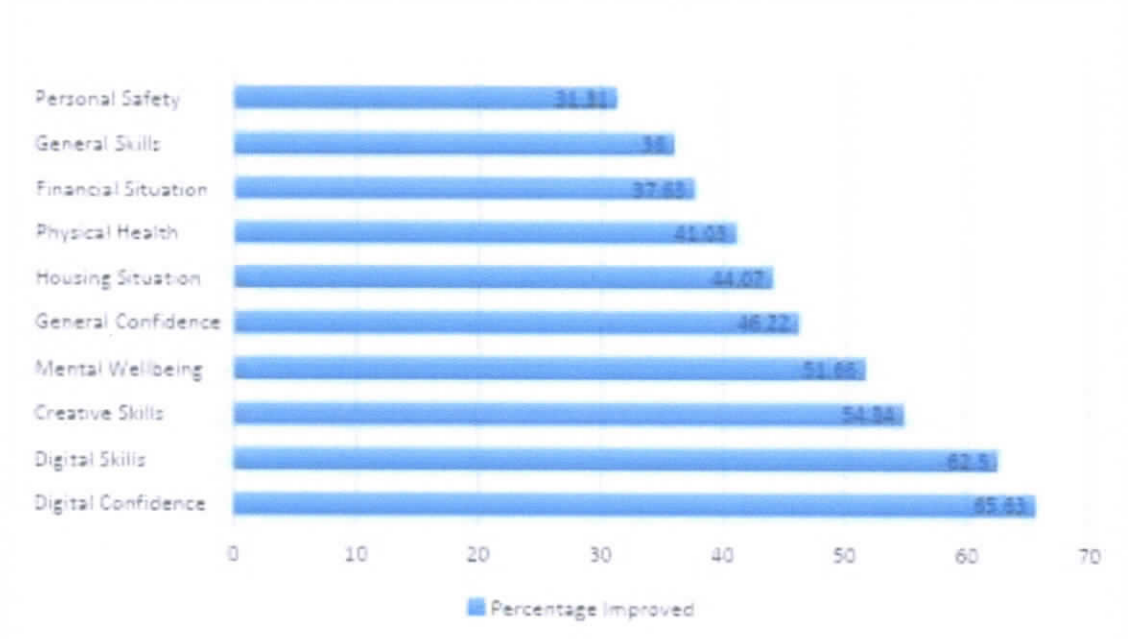
### 4- Digital Inclusion

High-impact targeted support for essential modern life skills.

- **Digital Confidence:** 21 out of 32 people improved (65.63%)
- **Digital Skills**: 5 out of 8 people improved (62.50%)

### 5- Employability:

**We supported 70 clients with employability** during this time period, about 50% progressed into work and 60% into training or education.



6- **Additionally:** we have provided an estimated 80 clients with material support, including sim cards, food vouchers, food back referrals, clothing and toy items, or refunded travel costs.
We have delivered about 30 wellbeing activities, including a Coastal Walk, Tennis, Bowling, Seal Sands Walk, White Lea- Farm walk, Bowling, Souter Lighthouse, Sports, Santa Day, Snowboarding, Ceramics, Go Karting, Coastal Walk, Creating Bird Feeders, Kayaking, Water Sports, Rowing, Coastering and many more.




7- **Environmental:** We have delivered about 50 environmental activity days through the East Rangers project alone, engaging about 50 adults and many children.

Most clients have benefited in more than one way. We have achieved more, but this are the outcomes we can report on with some confidence- many of our projects start or end either at the beginning of the calendar year, or the beginning of the financial year in April, hence data from exit forms is usually gathered close to those dates.



## Social Return on Investment:

## Financial Efficiency & Value

| Metric | Achievement |
|---|---|
| **Cost per Beneficiary** | **£395.22** |
| **Wellbeing Value** | £862,900 (Est. based on WELLBY/NHS savings) |
| **Stability Value** | £349,000 (Est. based on Housing/Benefit savings) |
| **Skills & Digital Value** | £93,000 (Est. based on human capital growth) |

## Conclusion

Our work demonstrates a **3.18:1 Social Return on Investment**. This indicates that the work is not merely a "cost," but a highly efficient investment that reduces the long-term financial burden on local health and housing authorities. By providing support for less than **£400 per person**, the project has successfully moved hundreds of individuals from crisis toward self-sufficiency and community contribution.

## Demographics:

### Summary

1- The client base is primarily a **Sunderland-based, working-age cohort (18–44)** with a near-even **Gender** split. It is highly multicultural, dominated by **Polish** and **Arabic** speakers. A significant portion (33%) are navigating the UK immigration system as **Refugees or Asylum Seekers**, indicating a high need for specialized support services.

2- **Geographic Distribution (The Sunderland Cohort)**

By consolidating satellite areas into the main city hub, we find that **6 out of 10** members are concentrated in the expanded Sunderland area.

- **Sunderland (Consolidated):** 514 members
- **Newcastle Upon Tyne**: 46 members
- **Gateshead:** 34 members
- **Co Durham**: 10 members

### 3- Gender and Age Profile

The group consists of young to middle-aged adults with balanced gender representation.

| **Category** | **Primary Findings** |
|---|---|
| Gender | Female: 398 \| Male: 383 |
| **Age Range** | **members** |
| Youth (18–24) | 154 (is the largest known group). |
| Adults (25–44) | 36 |
| Seniors (55+) | 9 |

### 4. Cultural and Linguistic Identity

The community is characterized by a strong Eastern European and Middle Eastern/African presence.

Top 5 Languages Spoken:

1. Polish: 264
2. Arabic: 117
3. English: 115
4. Kurdish: 36
5. Farsi: 24

Top 5 Countries of Origin:

1. Poland: 226
2. Sudan: 60
3. United Kingdom: 43
4. Iran: 39
5. Nigeria: 38

### 5. Immigration and Socio-Economic Status

A significant segment of the membership faces potential barriers to employment and housing due to their legal status.

- **Refugees and Asylum Seekers**: 278 members - 32.8%.
- **EU Settlement (Settled/Pre-settled):** 133 members - 15.7%
- **Employment:** Unemployed is the most common status - 32.9%, followed by those with No right to work – 14.6%.
- **Disability**: 5.2% of members (44 individuals) reported having a disability.

Our work is a vital asset to the Sunderland area. It moves participants from a state of crisis and isolation into a state of stability and empowerment. The high success rates in Wellbeing (51.7%) and Digital Literacy (65.6%) particularly demonstrate a programme that is not just "patching over" problems, but is providing the tools for long-term integration and self-sufficiency.

**Projects which did not fully fit into the scope (e.g., due to their length, or being delivered by more than 1 partners)**
**Back in Control 2 (August 2022 – November 2025)**

The project has provided vital and valuable support to BME people affected by Modern Day Slavery and Workplace Exploitation in Sunderland and the surrounding area.

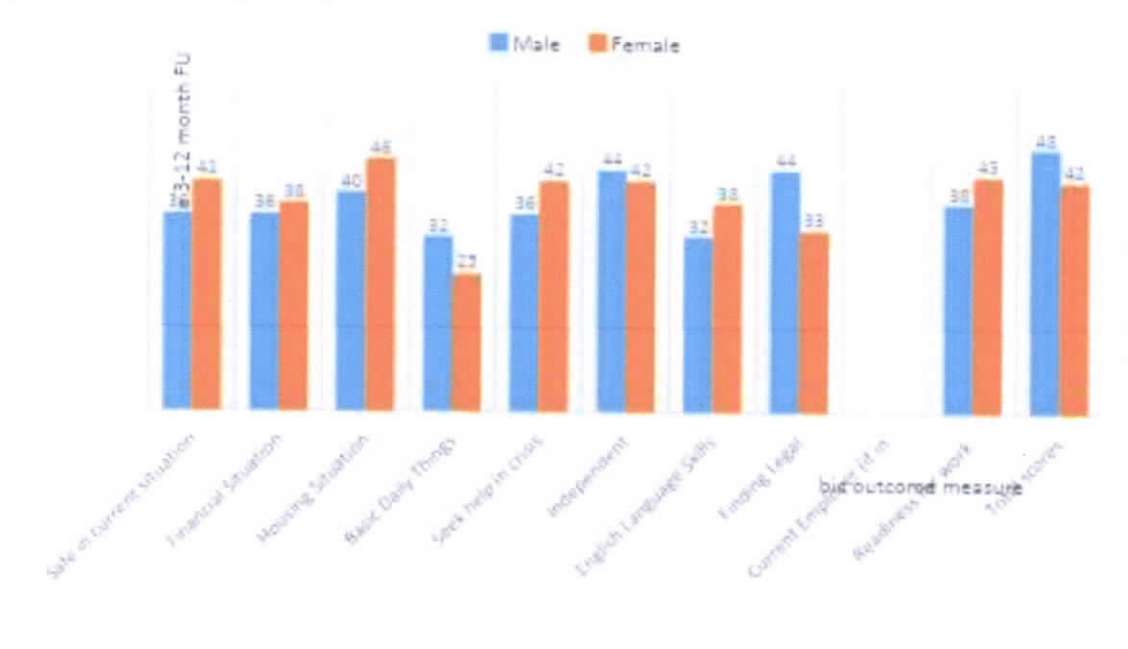
This has especially focused on several aspects of their lives:

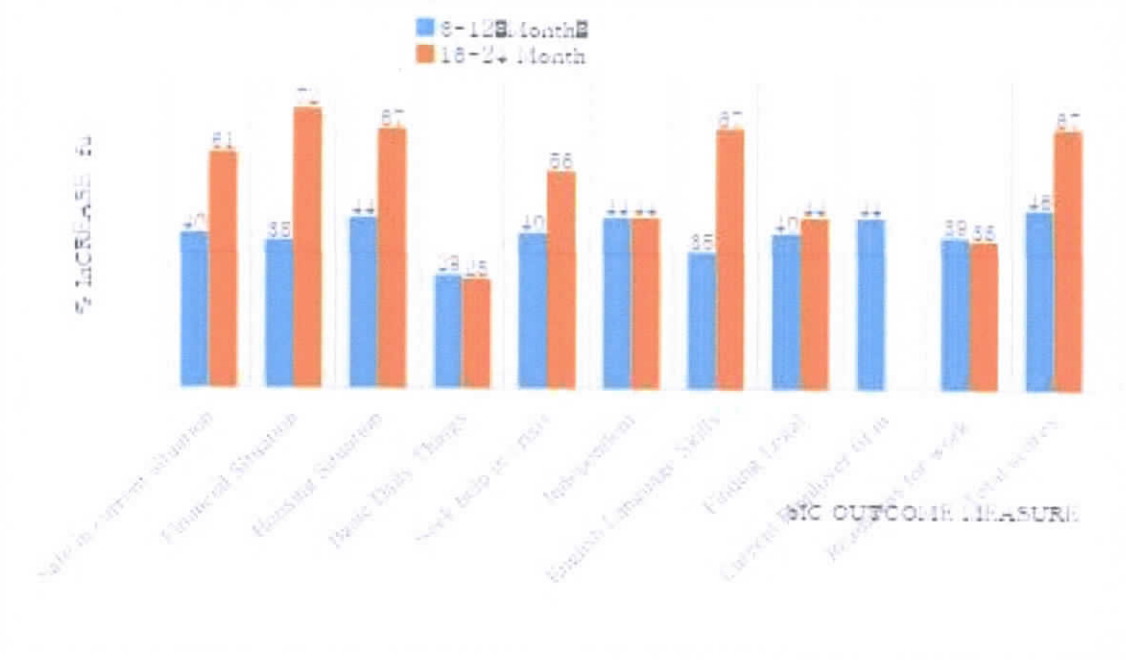
- Benefits
- Housing
- Support with immigration issues
- Material support
- Removing barriers in a flexible way
- General support and life and the UK, civic duties
- Employability
- Supporting asylum seekers
- Involvement and inclusion

**1- Impact and demographics:**

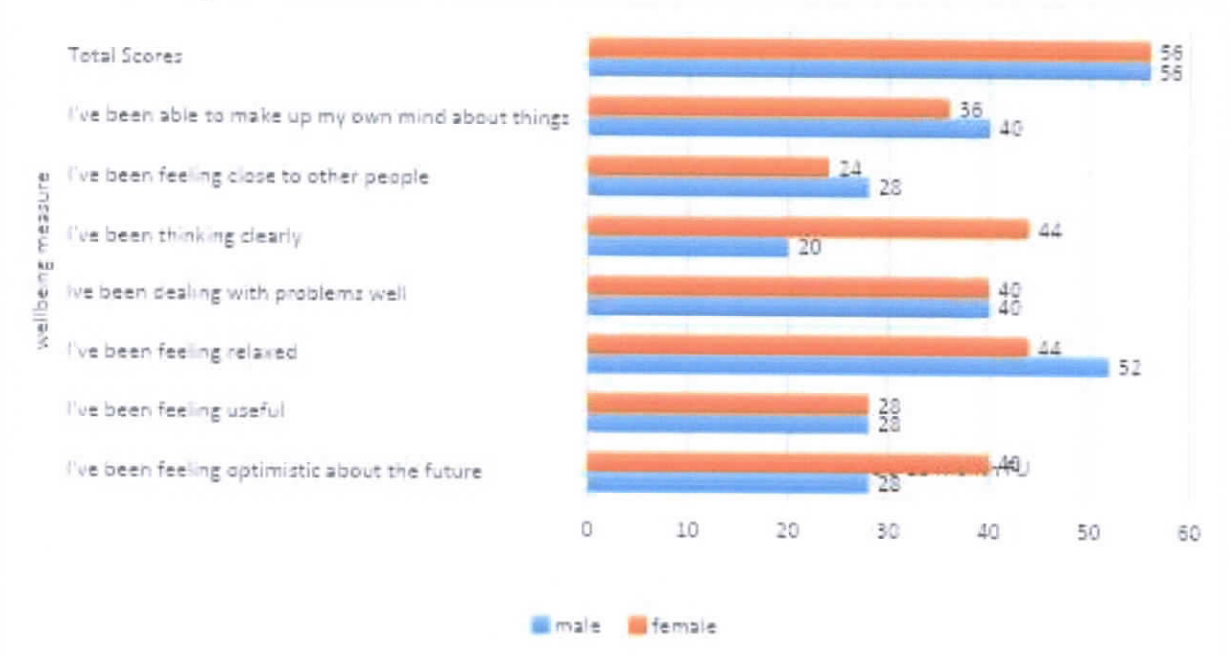
**Overall number of clients:**
**Agreed: 100**
**Achieved: 92**

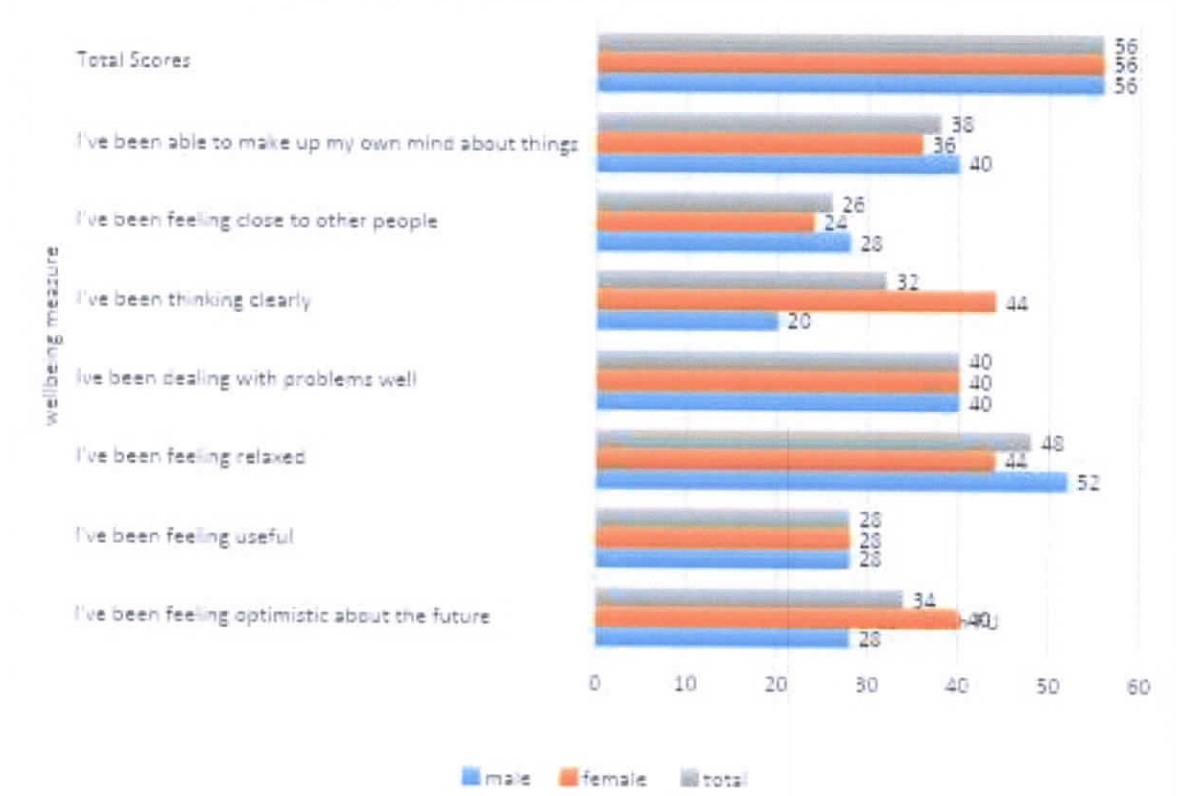
- **BiC Outcome Measure**

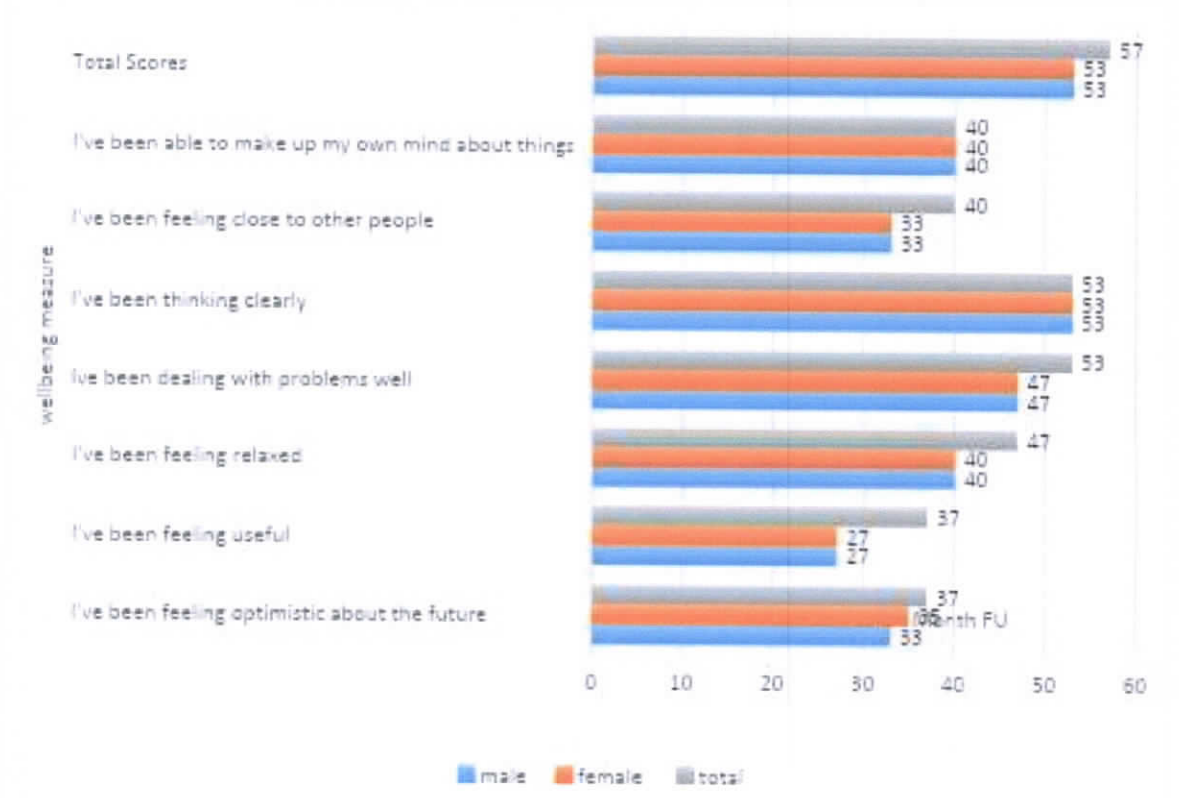




- **Wellbeing:**


Total Scores
I've been able to make up my own mind about things
I've been feeling close to other people
I've been thinking clearly
I've been dealing with problems well
I've been feeling relaxed
I've been feeling useful
I've been feeling optimistic about the future
wellbeing measure
56
56
36
40
24
28
44
20
40
40
44
52
28
28
40
28
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
male
female




**Discussion:**

Evaluation from 2022–2025 demonstrates that BiC2 reaches a highly diverse and vulnerable

group exposed to modern slavery and labour exploitation, helping people facing immigration uncertainties, language barriers, financial instability, and restricted employment prospects. Despite these challenges, sustained engagement with BiC2, particularly over periods longer than a year, results in measurable improvements in safety, housing, financial security, daily life skills, confidence, emotional regulation, and problem solving for survivors.

**Key Challenges and Impact**
Many BiC2 clients struggle with legal status, communication obstacles, limited finances, and very few job opportunities, making them susceptible to further exploitation.

Continuous support leads to survivors reporting increased safety, secure accommodation, better financial standing, and stronger capacity to navigate daily life and seek legal employment.

**Mechanisms and Barriers**
Survivor and stakeholder interviews identify how exploitation operates: deceptive job offers, financial control, coercion, and legal uncertainty push individuals into crisis, homelessness, trauma, and isolation.

BiC2's trauma-informed, person-centered approach is described as "essential," providing support to meet urgent needs, secure documentation, develop new skills, and reconnect with community networks.

Stakeholders stress that restrictive immigration policies, unstable funding, language gaps, and fragmented services obstruct recovery and heighten re-exploitation risks.

**Overall Effect and Future Needs**
The evidence points to BiC2 delivering deep, lasting benefits, allowing survivors to move towards stable, independent lives through holistic, multi-agency support.

Long-term recovery remains dependent on ongoing funding, better service coordination, and broader changes to policy and systems.

BiC2's approach illustrates how multi-faceted, holistic support empowers survivors to overcome exploitation and build safer, more secure futures, though systemic reforms are vital for sustained progress.

**Example projects:**

1- **The Migrant Health in Sunderland (MHS) project**, has successfully concluded its intensive delivery period from October 2025 to March 2026. This initiative was established to dismantle the profound barriers—including language, digital exclusion, and systemic opacity—that migrant communities face when accessing healthcare and essential advice.

A Holistic Model for Complex Needs

The project's success was rooted in a unified, person-centred model that integrated high-intensity advocacy with a vibrant wellbeing programme. Supporting 74 individuals from 24 countries, the

project served a cohort characterized by high complexity: 97% had limited English proficiency, and 70% had very substantive language barriers to navigate statutory services.

**Substantive Individual Outcomes**

The depth of engagement resulted in a 93% positive case resolution rate (comprising 54 fully and 15 partially resolved cases). Beyond resolving immediate crises, the project achieved measurable improvements in long-term stability and wellbeing:

Improved Mental Wellbeing: 59% of participants recorded higher scores on the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, with an average improvement of 1.48 points. Key gains were seen in clients' ability to think clearly, deal with problems well, and feel optimistic about the future.
Financial and Housing Stability: The project secured seven benefit awards (such as PIP), resolved high-stakes energy billing disputes, and assisted eight clients with positive grant outcomes. Housing situation scores also saw an average improvement of 0.61 points.
Access to Rights and Justice: Advocacy led to restored healthcare access after previous denials, successful challenges to police investigation closures through the Victims' Right to Review, and the progression of critical compensation claims.
Reduced Isolation and "Place Orientation": Wellbeing activities—including beach walks, rowing, and coastal trips—helped participants feel a sense of belonging in Sunderland. For many, this was a vital "first step" into community life, with several individuals progressing into formal volunteering roles.

This transformative work was only possible through the generous support of our funders, whose investment allowed us to provide the intensive, specialized care required by our participants. We also extend our sincere gratitude to Voluntary and Community Action Sunderland (VCAS), and specifically author Carl Chapman, for their rigorous external evaluation. Their independent analysis has provided a vital evidence base that will inform our ongoing efforts to reduce health inequalities and foster migrant inclusion across the region.

We would like to extend our gratitude to Voluntary Organnisations Network North East (VONNE) for funding this important project.

More information about the project is available here:

https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/MHS-Evaluation-Report-Final.pdf

**2- Know Your Neighbourhood / Creative Lives 2025 – 2026**

The project successfully created a welcoming, creative and supportive space for women and their children, particularly those from Eastern European backgrounds. Over six months we delivered **23 workshops** and **3 family events**, engaging **110 adults and 74 children**. Activities such as ceramics, crochet, painting, textile design, upcycled crafts and creative cooking helped participants build skills, confidence and meaningful social connections.
Feedback showed a strong positive impact: many participants met new people, felt more relaxed, reported improved wellbeing, and developed new creative abilities. Volunteers also played a key role, with **17 volunteers** supporting activities, planning sessions and helping shape community events.



3- Partnerships with **St Michael's Community Centre**, local artists and community organisations strengthened local engagement, increased participation and created opportunities for ongoing collaboration. Several elements of the project will continue, including monthly creative sessions, use of materials purchased during the project, and the community relationships that were built.

Overall, the project fostered creativity, reduced isolation, encouraged volunteering and strengthened community ties through shared cultural and artistic experiences.

More information: https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/P_P_KYN_3_-Report.docx

The general advice project, funded by Awards for All at the National Lottery Community Fund aimed at supporting at least 100 clients, out of whom:

-35% report improved wellbeing
-27% report an improved financial situation,
-22% report an improved housing situation
-19% report feeling safer
-58% report that their issues have been resolved

**The project has overachieved:**

-It supported at total of 130 clients (almost 30% more than planned)
-34.57% reported improved wellbeing (which could be rounded to 35%)
-34.57% reported an improved financial situation
-30.38% reported an improved housing situation
-31.25% reported feeling safer
-Crucially, 71.43% of people reported that their issue had been fully resolved
-In addition, 17.86% of people reported that their issue had been partially resolved
The vast majority reported more than one outcome/target being met.
As a result, our clients rated our support very highly:
-94.25% rated us as 8 or higher on a rising 1-10 Likert scale.
-This includes 70%, who rated our support as 10 out of 10.

It provided a vital lifeline for migrant people, including those with the experience of the asylum system, domestic abuse or exploitation.

More information could be found here: https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/AFA-2024-2025-Report-July-August-2025.pdf

**The following case studies illustrate the difference we have been able to make:**
https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Case-Study-BiC-Jamal.pdf
https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Case-Study-ILONA-BiC.pdf
https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/BIC-Case-Study-Natalia.pdf
https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Case-Study-K-.pdf
https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Case-Study-Mariusz.pdf
https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/BiC-Case-Study-O.-.pdf
https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Martyna-BIC-case-study-with-logo-1.pdf

**Strengths, achievements and opportunities:**
We have a very motivated, focused, and skilled workforce. Our staff are also committed to our organization's mission, and often willing to go an extra mile for the clients they support, and for the sake of the projects they deliver. Our staff members are also interested in upskilling themselves, and in their continuous professional development.

We have also got an increasing number of volunteers supporting our delivery, including many dedicated regular volunteers. Many of them are current students or recent graduates, but some come from other walks of life, including unemployed or economically inactive people, as well as the over 50s. This increasing volunteer base has enabled us to increase our capacity, notably in areas such as running events and some communications functions, such as social media and the newsletter. This is a vital resource to ICOS, and it helps us to deliver more services, and better services for the people. The main areas our volunteers have been involved in include wellbeing activities, environmental activities, women's activities, and sports, as well as office volunteering (e.g., administration and communication).
ICOS has been able to develop new partnerships with several organisations from the VCSE sector, as well as the private companies. These partnerships are enabling us to tap into more potential and increase our capacity to deliver our projects, including through accessing extra funds, accessing corporate volunteers, and applying for funding together.
Organisations we have recently started working closely with include Newcastle Building Society, Durham Wildlife Trust, or British Gas.

In 2025-2026, we have created, and are now implementing our 2025-2030 strategy, which includes plans to generate unrestricted income through creating a community café, enabling even more clients to shape our services through creating an organization-wide Project Steering Group, and recruiting trustees with the experience of the asylum system, amongst other development areas.
We have already made significant progress towards the objectives outlined in the strategy, including training our staff in Level 2 Information, Advice and Guidance, increasing our capacity to deliver immigration advice, and creating a designated funding pot to support client access costs such as travel for destitute migrants. We have also created an ICOS– Wide Project Steering Group, which has

so far involved 6 people in shaping our work, including engagement and reaching out to potential clients, internal communications and our focus. We are also doing further work on increasing the depth and breadth of our services, including plans to become regulated to provide immigration advice at level 2.

Our business development plans, including plans to develop a coffee shop are also taking shape, while we recognise that they will take some time to develop due to issues such as planning permission or licensing, as well as identifying and accessing suitable funding. Additionally, ICOS has started working with St Michael's Community Centre to take over the coordination of the centre, which will bring new opportunities for the area, as well as ICOS, including making ICOS more financially sustainable.

ICOS has been able to amplify the voices of our clients and communities to influence processes affecting them. For example, we have been invited to participate in the North East ICB equity strategy. We have also been able to show the impact of different societal issues on our clients, such as hate crime, discrimination, access to healthcare and domestic abuse- notably migrant women (https://www.itv.com/news/tyne-tees/2024-09-23/mum-called-prostitute-on-school-run-amid-eastern-european-discrimination , https://www.audible.co.uk/podcast/Domestic-abuse-and-Eastern-European-women/B0CMDTCT1L , https://sure.sunderland.ac.uk/id/eprint/17445/). We are able to use this knowledge to ensure decision makers are aware of the importance and the depth of the issues our clients face. We also use them to plan our activities, and create an evidence base testifying to the need for our work. ICOS has also featured in the local media, as our contribution to the community has been noticed: https://www.sunderlandecho.com/news/people/ukrainian-migrants-who-found-safety-in-sunderland-meet-secretary-of-state-for-defence-5400503?fbclid=IwY2xjawOHxXNleHRuA2FlbQIxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjIwMzkxNzg4MjAwODkyCGNhbGxzaXRlAjMwAAEeA7GMRjCz2_7iEY8_Eq0aARLa8ekNg-RPyiyKdIFbe6sGlLlO9Gu8PZT7YPY_aem_7Oh0kRRV73gfYsHvsENCcQ , https://www.sunderlandecho.com/news/people/9-pictures-of-families-enjoying-the-new-facilities-at-backhouse-park-in-sunderland-5157909.

The ICOS Women project is growing in size and impact, and the women benefit not just from one to one support and social meet ups, but also co-produce the project through the Project Steering Group, which has recently risen from 8 to 12, and decides the direction of the work. The group now also influences external bodies through research, including research projects focusing on the impact of poverty on Eastern European families.

Women have also been able to find a space within this group to develop their own projects and initiatives, including the Mums Club (which was originally developed by a volunteer who had young children), which has now involved over 100 women in Sunderland, and has more recently expanded into Newcastle upon Tyne through a sister project - the Newcastle Mums Club project- NEEMC (https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/The-Newcastle-Mums-Club-2025-2026-final-report-.pdf).

Both – within the wider ICOS Women remit, as well as its Mums' subsection, creativity has flourished, which has been recognised externally:



https://www.sunderlandecho.com/news/people/how-arts-partnerships-in-sunderland-are-helping-to-transform-communities-5599911?fbclid=IwY2xjawQFIcpleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETAzYW42TjhUOTJZbnN1N0tqc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjIyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHkNKoKvAs-nzMr4K3z2n4cfdkSNh0rMw1VtsOb4tl7GCjpWHWYtXEN7VNI7V_aem_yN1GEB2devfTaj7hEJjNyw

https://www.sunderlandecho.com/lifestyle/food-and-drink/we-gave-sunderland-the-chance-to-tuck-into-pierogi-mushroom-soup-and-more-at-polish-food-event-5193384?fbclid=IwY2xjawLsjMJleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETBCR1Budllrc0FpdzdxamJDAR7TC-QrmVmXsG-U81qrzNWOUFIBDqSP_-GUQ3xprqmH7d98DgiiYT3d2CqYgA_aem_lyA14lDslYY1xjDfTBqChA

Back in Control 2 project's Project Steering Group has continued to contribute to effective delivery of the project through enabling co-production with the clients. The group currently involves 6 members, or all who have the experience of either modern day slavery, workplace exploitation, and in some cases- both. Through working with the PSG, we are implementing changes to the project in areas such as more effective wellbeing support, and or employability support.

**Strengthening Partnerships:**
Collaborated with TWIC, North East Law Centre, Migrant Help, Together for Children, Sunderland City Council, The Phoenix Way, and the North East Antiracism Coalition (formed after the 2024 racist riots).

The Shared Sunderland project has been instrumental in supporting migrant communities by providing advice, advocacy, leadership development, and policy influence. Despite challenges, it has built sustainable structures that continue beyond its funding period, creating a lasting impact on inclusion, local policy, and migrant empowerment in Sunderland.

## Client involvement:

1- **Incorporating the previous (2025) annual survey into our delivery**

We recognize the value of input from our community. Last year, we have heard of the importance of providing (1) employability support (2) wellbeing and family activities (3) material support and access to essentials.
We have worked hard to deliver on these priorities. This included creating, and applying for projects to continue and expand these lines of work, and working with others to deliver activities and projects (e.g., Cultural Spring). We have also increased accessibility budgets use to pay for client travel for destitute clients in line with the immense and disproportionate impact of the cost of living crisis on migrant people we support on a day to day basis.

### 2- The ICOS – Wide Project Steering Group (PSG)

Established in the second half of 2025 as a result of the feedback from the 2024 strategic review and annual survey, the group has so far enabled 7 clients to shape our services. The group regularly review performance, priorities, and reach and propose solutions. They also meet with staff to share their views with them and find out about challenges and successes. The PSG has enabled ICOS to make improvements, e.g., we have now established a client – wide Whats App group to share opportunities more widely and enable for more means of receiving information from the clients. The PSG have also strengthened our resolve in increasing our level of immigration regulation from 1 to 2, highlighting the need for providing timely advice on more complex cases.

### 3- The 2026 annual survey

The survey enabled 52 clients to have a say on our future and to provide feedback on our current work. The survey targeted 10% of the clients registered on our system (89), but slightly less were available to take part. It was conducted during the summer of 2026, and staff normally made three attempts to contact each of the randomly selected clients.
**The results of the survey were as follows:**

- **Key Satisfaction Metrics**

| Metric | Score / Count | Percentage (N=52) |
|---|---|---|
| **Average Rating** | **9.38 / 10** (Median: 10) | — |
| **Top Satisfaction (8–10 Rating)** | 50 respondents | 96.2% |
| **Maximum Satisfaction (10/10)** | 37 respondents | 71.2% |
| **Low Satisfaction (1–5/10)** | 2 respondents | 3.8% |
| **Willingness to Case Study being written** | 29 respondents | 55.8% |

- **Consolidated Thematic Analysis**

| Theme | Current Client Issues (Q1) | Most Impactful Support Received (Q8) | Hopes for Next 12 Months (Q9) | Fears & Worries for Next 12 Months (Q10) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **15 mentions (28.8%)** | **17 mentions (32.7%)** | **7 mentions (13.5%)** | **12 mentions (23.1%)** |
| **Material, Financial & Housing** | Furniture, baby supplies, diapers, clothes, food vouchers, council tax, benefits. | Essential baby/household goods, council tax fixes, SIM cards, housing applications. | Improving family finances, changing homes, general stability. | Child winter essentials, poor housing conditions, health issues. |
| | **10 mentions (19.2%)** | **15 mentions (28.8%)** | **12 mentions (23.1%)** | **0 mentions (0.0%)** |
| **Social Connection & Wellbeing** | Reducing isolation, mental health, family reunification, community walks. | Women's groups, coastal walks, family trips, peer networks. | Volunteering with ICOS, maintaining health, community activities. | *(No explicit standalone fears cited in this domain).* |
| | **10 mentions (19.2%)** | **7 mentions (13.5%)** | **15 mentions (28.8%)** | **7 mentions (13.5%)** |
| **Employment & Skills** | CV help, job search, interview prep, English language skills. | CSCS card courses, ESOL, CV building. | Finding stable work, sponsorship (COS) jobs, college. | Unemployment, lost driving license, financial insecurity. |
| **Immigration & Legal Status** | **9 mentions (17.3%)** | **9 mentions (17.3%)** | **7 mentions (13.5%)** | **4 mentions (7.7%)** |

| Theme | Current Client Issues (Q1) | Most Impactful Support Received (Q8) | Hopes for Next 12 Months (Q9) | Fears & Worries for Next 12 Months (Q10) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Citizenship applications, e-Visa status, visa extensions. | Direct citizenship filings, solicitor referrals, document translation. | Resolving pending visas and citizenship status. | Visa processing delays, rising community discrimination. |
| | **14 mentions (26.9%)** | **9 mentions (17.3%)** | **14 mentions (26.9%)** | **22 mentions (42.3%)** |
| **None / Unspecified / Unsure** | | | | |
| | No current help needed. | General help / holistic care. | Unsure or no specific hopes. | No immediate worries or fears. |

- **What ICOS Should Do More Of:**

While 37 clients (71.2%) reported that current offerings are already broad and sufficient, 15 clients (28.8%) highlighted specific areas for enhancement:

| Category | Mentions (N=52) | Percentage | Key Client Requests |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Communication & Outreach** | 5 | 9.6% | Provide regular updates on available services, publicize activities more widely, and stay in consistent contact. |
| **Community Cohesion & Drop-In Spaces** | 4 | 7.7% | Create dedicated drop-in spaces for client conversation, organize community cohesion events to reduce local misunderstandings, and expand reach to help more people in other cities. |
| **Outings, Trips & Family Events** | 3 | 5.8% | Host more family outings, children's parties, and community trips. |

| Category | Mentions (N=52) | Percentage | Key Client Requests |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Skills, Employment & Language** | 3 | 5.8% | Expand job placement introductions, English courses, and confidence/communication workshops. |

- **Survey results' discussion:**

-While we recognize that this survey was done by ICOS's staff, one of the key takeaways must be that ICOS's work appears to be valued by clients- with over 71% of clients surveyed rating ICOS at 10 out of 10, and over 96% altogether rating our support at between 8 – 10 on a rising Likert scale.

-This is coupled with the fact that over 71% of the clients also said that ICOS did not need to make any changes to its work.

-At the same time, while there is nothing that, according to the clients' survey ICOS should stop doing, small numbers clients have suggested changes / improvements, which we will be working to implement- notably better external communications, even more wellbeing activities, and community cohesion activities to get different communities together.

-The main worries our clients were experiencing, as were as current issues were related to financial and material situation, social isolation, and unemployment/lack of work immigration status. These could be seen as strongly interlinked- e.g., poverty might impact on being able to socialize, while immigration status directly, and indirectly impacts on income.

-When it comes to hopes, the biggest percentage of clients surveyed valued future employment and skills opportunities (28.8%), followed by social and wellbeing opportunities (23.1%), and resolution of pending immigration issue (13.5%)

-The most valuable types of support we have provided included material and financial support (32.7%), social end wellbeing support (28.8%), and immigration and legal status support.

The results of the survey provide us with a strong mandate to focus on progression in life, including employment and skills, essential support with basic needs, immigration and wellbeing work., additionally considering cohesion space and reach as we continue on our journey. They also reassure us that we are seen as a trusted charity and make a real difference to client lives.

- **Future plans:**

-Following up on the strategic review of our work.
-Further advance plans for income generation in order to secure the core of our work in the light of the financial challenges described above. These plans include establishing a coffee shop to generate extra income, and being commissioned by local / regional commissioners.

-Utilizing greater financial resources to create spare capacity within the organization to meet current and future challenges, and ensure good outcomes for our clients, and the wider community, as well as good staff wellbeing and morale.
-Improving our external communications.
-Building on our recent success, including the popular and well performing projects, such as ICOS Women, ICOS Sport / Wellbeing and our environmental work, as well as research and influencing work.
-Becoming upgrading the regulatory level for immigration advice to level to in order to be able to deal with more complex cases.





**Appendix 1: case studies:**
https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Case-Study-Links-for-Life-2025_Client-A.pdf

https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Case-Study-Links-for-Life-2025_Client-B.pdf
https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Case-Study-Links-for-Life-2025_Client-C.pdf
https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/The-Access-Foundation-Case-study-1.pdf (digital inclusion)
https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/The-Access-Foundation-Case-study2.pdf (digital inclusion)
https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Evan-Cornish-Case-Study-Client-M.pdf
https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Case-Study_01.pdf
https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Case-Study_01_Wellbeing.pdf
https://icos.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Case-Study_02_Wellbeing.pdf

**Videos:**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_hIDtGvdXQ
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gVZJOwZz2E
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUvkNI1YLPI
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Zl6RM48HSM

**Appendix 2: quotes:**

- "That I am more capable than I think."
- "I have gained loads of skills and experience."
- "I have learned organisational skills, met new people."
- "Any time I needed help, ICOS was there to help me."

**Appendix 3: social media posts:**
https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1271868204982601&set=pcb.1271868434982578
https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1313877924114962&set=a.363399425829488
https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1311705357665552&set=a.363399425829488
https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1308637354639019&set=a.363399425829488
https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1305957404907014&set=a.363399415829489
https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1296912202478201&set=a.363399425829488
https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1282240017278753&set=a.363399425829488
https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1282908023878619&set=a.363399415829489
https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1283115690524519&set=a.363399425829488
https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1286783380157750&set=pcb.1286795163489905
https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1286782856824469&set=pcb.1286795163489905
https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1276684424500979&set=a.363399425829488

https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7396603754952904704/
https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7402648156682809344/
https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7398670620508717056/

***We would like to thank our funders and sponsors, without whom we would not have been able to make a difference to our clients:***



**Independent examiners report to the trustees of**
**International Community Association of Sunderland (ICOS)**
**For the period ended 31st March 2026**

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I report on the accounts of the charity for the period ended 31st Match 2026, which are set on pages 3 to 5

**Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner**
The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- Examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act
- Follow the procedures laid down in the general directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Ac, and
- State whether particular matters have come to my attention

**Basis of independent examiner's report**
My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records held by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeking explanation from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be provided in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a "true and fair view", and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

**Independent examiner's statement**

In connect with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- which gives me reasonable cause to believe that, in any material respect, the requirements
    - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act and
    - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 act have not been met: or

- to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached

ANDREW MCCULLOUGH ACMA
Certax Accounting (Sunderland) Ltd
14 Foyle Street
Sunderland
SR1 1LE
Independent Examiner
01st September 2026

A McCullough

01 Sep 2026

# International Community Organisation Of Sunderland

## Report of the Trustees for the year ended 31st March 2026

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name:** | International Community Organisation of Sunderland |
| **Address:** | 14 Foyle Street<br>Sunderland<br>SR1 1LE |
| **Charity No:** | 1186618 |

**Trustees (who served during the year)**

| | |
|---|---|
| Rafal Marzec | (Chair) |
| Nyasha Tafaune | (Vice Chair) |
| Iga Borsut | (Treasurer) |
| Agnieszka Serafin | |
| Anna Heyman | |
| Joy Adekola | |

**Independent Examiner**

Certax Accounting (Sunderland) Ltd
14 Foyle Street
Sunderland
SR1 1LE

# International Community Organisation Of Sunderland

## Statement of Financial Activities for the Period ended 31st March 2026

| Income | Notes | Restricted | Unrestricted | Total 2026 £ | Total 2025 £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Receipts** | | | | | |
| Grants | 2 | 243,878 | 73,000 | 316,878 | 308,310 |
| Donations/Gift Aid/Fundraising | | 0 | 4,379 | 4,379 | 7,889 |
| Trading Activities | | 0 | 8,313 | 8,313 | 4,119 |
| Refund | | 0 | 417 | 417 | 2,348 |
| Transfer | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Donations from external bodies to clients | | 0 | 2,490 | 2,490 | 2,250 |
| Interest received (savings account) | | 0 | 2,655 | 2,655 | 1,076 |
| **Subtotal** | | **243,878** | **91,254** | **335,132** | **325,993** |
| Asset & Investment Sales, etc. | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Total Receipts** | | **243,878** | **91,254** | **335,132** | **325,993** |
| **Payments** | | | | | |
| Rent | | 13,080 | | 13,080 | 13,080 |
| Insurance | | 1,184 | | 1,184 | 1,273 |
| Salaries/NIN/HMRC | | 201,242 | 35,287 | 236,529 | 213,076 |
| Payroll/Independent Examination | | 526 | 282 | 808 | 817 |
| Pension (True Potential) | | 9,647 | 592 | 10,239 | 8,205 |
| Events costs | | 9,646 | 3,540 | 13,186 | 9,580 |
| Workshops | | 8,826 | | 8,826 | 6,224 |
| Sessional work | | 7,878 | 354 | 8,232 | 8,809 |
| Consultancy | | 2,750 | 1,500 | 4,250 | 11,889 |
| Translation | | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| Evaluation | | 0 | 1,110 | 1,110 | 5,341 |
| CIB Contracting | | 9,893 | | 9,893 | 30,474 |
| Training | | 1,423 | | 1,423 | 53 |
| Office costs: Admin, stationery, IT, cleaning | | 2,042 | 619 | 2,661 | 3,315 |
| Other | | 0 | 20 | 20 | 0 |
| Capital grant | | 1,146 | | 1,146 | 4,568 |
| Posters/ advertising | | 765 | | 765 | 2,167 |
| Participant expenses | | 8,156 | 3,167 | 11,323 | 25,393 |
| Staff expenses | | 7,488 | 664 | 8,152 | 8,650 |
| Volunteer expenses | | 6,104 | 69 | 6,173 | 6,526 |
| Venue/Room hire | | 5,723 | | 5,723 | 4,833 |
| Bank fees | | 55 | 1 | 56 | 94 |
| Refund | | 0 | 282 | 282 | 2,859 |
| Transfer to savings account | | 1,379 | | 1,379 | 6,054 |
| **Subtotal** | | **298,952** | **47,486** | **346,438** | **373,281** |
| **Asset & Investment Purchases, etc.** | | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| **Total Payments** | | **298,952** | **47,486** | **346,438** | **373,281** |
| **Surplus** | | **-55,074** | **43,768** | **-11,306** | **-47,288** |
| **Transfer Between Funds** | | 1,379 | | 1,379 | 6,054 |
| **Funds Brought Forward** | | 183,170 | 79,841 | 263,011 | 304,245 |
| **Funds Carried Forward** | | **129,475** | **123,610** | **253,084** | **263,011** |

# International Community Organisation Of Sunderland

## Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2026

| | 2026 £ Unrestricted | 2026 £ Restricted | 2026 £ | 2025 £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Current Assets** | | | | |
| **Cash at bank and in Hand** | 123,610 | 129,475 | 253,084 | 263,011 |
| **Debtors and Prepayments** | | | | 0 |
| **Less Current Liabilities** | | | | |
| **Creditors and Accruals** | | | 0 | 0 |
| **Net Current Assets** | 123,610 | 129,475 | 253,084 | 263,011 |
| **Funded By** | | | | |
| **Unrestricted Funds** | | | 36,925 | 45,903 |
| **Restricted Funds** | | | 81,351 | 156,353 |
| **Savings** | | | 134,809 | 60,755 |
| **Total Funds** | | | 253,085 | 263,011 |

**Approved by** IGA BORSUT treasurer **Trustee**

Borsut

# ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2025/26
# CERTIFICATION OF INDEPENDENT SIGN OFF

## International Community Association of Sunderland

I have examined the Statement of Financial Activities and Balance Sheet for the Year ending 31st March 2026 together with the underlying accounting records, and confirm that the accounts are in accordance therewith.

AMcCullough 01 Sep 2026

Signed..... Dated.....

**ANDREW MCCULLOUGH A.C.M.A.**
**Certax Accounting (Sunderland) Ltd**
Independent Reviewer