

Our impact: Supporting engineers in 2024–25

Foothold (The Institution of Engineering and Technology Benevolent Fund) Registered in England. Registration no. 00441284. Registered charity no. 208925

Contents

Welcome from our CEO Jane	2
Our purpose and ambition	3
Our year in numbers	4
Supporting people through tough times	4
Our core support.....	4
Financial grants.....	4
My Money Checker and advice and guidance services	5
Adam’s story	6
Building our community’s resilience to life’s challenges	7
Webinars	7
Mental Health Check-In.....	8
Video storytelling	9
Support from our community	10
Support from corporates	10
Support from individuals	11
Our fundraising practices	12
Support from volunteers.....	13
How you helped us make a difference.....	13
What we generated.....	13
What we spent	13

Welcome from our CEO Jane

Welcome to your 2024–25 impact report which showcases some of the highlights of the past year for our Foothold community. Your efforts, whether as donors, volunteers or supporters, meant that our team has continued to deliver financial, health and wellbeing support to engineers and their families from across the world.

The uncertainty faced by the financial markets and cost of living crisis meant that we needed to review and reduce our eligibility criteria to ensure that the funds we did have available reached those in greatest need.

Even though the number of financial grants we were able to provide fell, our teams worked together to ensure that we supported as many members of the community as possible by growing our digital health and wellbeing services and expanding our advice and guidance service to community members in the six countries who most requested our support. That work will continue to expand into other countries in 2025–26.

The launch of our Mental Health Check-In tool and continuing success of our webinar programme together with our revised video format and adoption of new social media platforms helped us reach out to many more people in our community.

And thank you to all our community members who shared their stories with us, encouraging other community members to reach out and seek support. Whilst our team continue to seek cost effective and innovative ways of delivering more support than ever, none of this would be possible without your generosity.

Whether you walked, ran, baked or donated, used our free Wills service to leave us a gift for the future or gave your story or your time – **thank you**. This report is for you. You, like generations of engineers before you, made it happen and helped us to ensure that no engineer nor their family must face life's challenges alone.

Jane Petit, CEO

Our purpose and ambition

Our purpose

We exist to ensure that no engineer or their family needs to face life's challenges alone.

Our ambition

To increase the wellbeing of engineers and their families worldwide.

Our objectives

To provide financial or other assistance to persons of all ages who are in need who are beneficiaries of the Fund in any manner which the Trustees consider expedient.

Our strategic objectives

1. **ENABLE** our community to participate in a socially inclusive lifestyle by:
 - Achieving a household income of 75% of MIS level for eligible community members
 - Amplifying voices of organisations advocating for social change around poverty and associated issues
2. **EMPOWER** our community to increase their resilience to life's challenges by:
 - Creating connected communities
 - Developing digital health and wellbeing offers
 - Engaging with new partners to widen our scope
 - Creating positive change by developing our understanding of equality, diversity, equity and inclusion issues and how we can address them
 - Being a barometer for the health and wellbeing of our engineering community
3. **SUSTAIN** support for and from our community by:
 - Engaging our community with our purpose
 - Developing and implementing a digital strategy
 - Increasing our voluntary income
 - Maintaining expenditure within budget
 - Creating innovative models of volunteering

We work to achieve our ambition by:

- **PROVIDING** financial grants for our community to cover living costs to prevent poverty.
- **WORKING** with our partners to provide advice and guidance for our community.

- **OFFERING** digital support through webinars, blogs, our app, Wellbeing Hub, Differently Wired Hub and Mental Health Check-In.
- **ENCOURAGING** the community to feel they can ask for support, and give support in return.

Our year in numbers

- **£1.2m** spent delivering **1,257** instances of support to **1,226** people in **47** countries
- **£968k** in donations and legacies
- **226** new people applied for support
- **108** people received one or more grants
- **2,245** sign-ups to online support hubs and webinars
- **23,002** digital health and wellbeing sessions delivered

Supporting people through tough times

Our core support

We aim to ensure all eligible community members can enjoy a socially inclusive lifestyle, with a weekly household income no less than 75% of the headline Minimum Income Standard Level*. This is defined as the level at which people can get by day to day, but struggle to cope with unexpected costs. That's why we offer both ongoing and one-off grants, tailored to people's individual circumstances.

*As set by Loughborough University and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

- **£423,613** paid in grants to **122** people, between the ages of **18–94**, in **17** countries
- **£392,547** in regular grants
- **£22,081** in one-off grants for mental health, disability support and medical costs
- **£10,185** in one-off grants for cost of living support
- **103** people received regular payments
- **5** of these people also received a one-off payment
- **19** only received a one-off payment

Financial grants

Our financial grants provide regular support with the costs of living, as well as one-off awards for counselling, household goods and costs related to disability assessments, equipment and adaptations. Our grants support a wide range of households in the UK

and abroad, with **41%** of our financial grants going to community members under the age of 35 and **44%** providing support for community members with a disability.

My Money Checker and advice and guidance services

- **178** My Money Checker letters sent
- **94** advice and guidance letters sent

With the tightening of our eligibility criteria and financial support thresholds, we wanted to provide what support we could – even where we were not able to provide a grant. So, we expanded our My Money Checker service to anyone applying for financial support. We also broadened the scope of our advice and guidance to community members in countries outside of the UK.

Through the research carried out by the Grants team, the My Money Checker and advice and guidance service was expanded to cover the six countries from which we received the most applications, and where there was information available on state or charitable support using online information or information from community members living in those countries.

“So far I have reached out to our local council to reduce council tax and I am in the process of reducing my mortgage.”

“Thank you for the My Money Checker letter. I've had a look through it and there were a couple of things I didn't already know about, so I'm going to have a closer look at those in the coming days.”

Adam's story

"In these worrying times we're all facing, it's easy to become consumed by anxiety, but Foothold gave me light and I'm so very grateful for that."

Adam Payne

I'm Adam, an electrical engineer from Mid Wales. I've always had an eye for electrical engineering and have been fascinated by this area for as long as I can remember. So, after finishing school in the eighties, I couldn't wait to become an apprentice electrician.

My unprocessed childhood trauma led me to retreat from social situations and eventually I left my course. This led to a downward spiral of anxiety and depression, affecting my income and sense of identity.

Just as the strain of my financial situation was becoming desperate, I was referred to Foothold by the IET.

My caseworker reviewed my circumstances, and I began receiving regular financial support. This was a huge relief because as the money came in, my financial worries instantly eased.

I still had my other issues to contend with, but now I could focus on working through them without worrying about how I was going to pay my bills or feed myself.

I was grateful to Foothold's befriending service during the Covid-19 lockdown as the isolation at this time brought additional challenges. This really was a lifeline to me during a very lonely time.

I was able to chat to a peer about both engineering and personal things – we got on like a house on fire and I was so thankful for the company.

Knowing the Foothold community had my back was so reassuring.

Now, I am in a more secure place, no longer in need of Foothold's financial support. I'm continuing my courses, educating myself on mindfulness and assertiveness, and volunteering at a repair café.

My journey's shown that perseverance and self-care are key to regaining my identity and overcoming challenges. In these worrying times we're all facing, it's easy to become consumed by anxiety, but Foothold gave me light and I'm so very grateful for that.

If you're going through a difficult time, don't hesitate to get in touch with Foothold as they might be able to help you rebuild your life too, one step at a time.

Building our community's resilience to life's challenges

We provided direct support through financial grants, in-house support, referral to our expert partners, and online through our website, webinar programme, app, blog, Wellbeing Hub, Mental Health Check-In and Differently Wired Hub.

- Supporting **1,226** people
- **139** grants for direct wellbeing or financial support
- **94** referrals to partner organisations
- **2,142** webinar sign ups
- **325** Mental Health Check-Ins
- **54** Differently Wired Hub sign-ups
- **49** Wellbeing Hub sign-ups

As well as delivering:

- **23,002** open-access digital health and wellbeing sessions
- **6,951** 'How can we help you' sessions
- **138** app downloads
- **3** Sleepstation registrations
- **7,379** blog views
- **4,022** YouTube views

Webinars

Our free monthly webinars deliver insightful information and actionable advice for the engineering community. In 2024–25, we delivered webinars on topics including mindfulness, work-life balance, gut health, neurodiversity and financial planning.

- **2,142** webinar sign-ups in 2024–25
- **+15%** increase in sign-ups over 2023–24
- **325** sign-ups to most popular webinar

This year we hosted our most popular webinar yet, with **325** people signing up to 'Future Finances: The Importance of Estate Planning and Making a Will.'

It's fantastic to see new topics resonating with attendees, and we have started to receive direct emails from returning webinar attendees confirming their attendance, or sharing their thoughts after the event. It has become clear that we're building a community; familiar names greet and share their thoughts in the chat, and we have many regular attendees.

Of course, this sense of community is more challenging to report on than sign-up numbers, but following data management work this year, we now have a more comprehensive overview of what's going on with webinar attendance than ever before.

We now have access to more information on the demographics of those who sign up, including the proportion of returners and newcomers for each webinar, and how they've rated both the webinar content and speaker.

We're now keenly looking at in-webinar engagement, the number of community members who return for future webinars, and experimenting with new topics – not just ones that will guarantee high sign-up rates – so that we can continue to offer holistic support for our community.

"I found the session very informative and it gave me some useful strategies I can follow to remain healthy as I age."

Clifford Penton, attended 'Healthy Ageing'

"Thanks for teaching me some fantastic techniques which I definitely will try for my anxiety and stress."

Roya Ershadi, attended 'In Practice: Mindfulness, Visualisation and Meditation'

"I was surprised to learn just how much poor nutrition and physical problems can affect mental health. The webinar content was laid out in a clear and easy-to-understand way and was well presented."

Richard Bismark, attended 'Men's Mental Health'

Mental Health Check-In

In September 2024, we launched Mental Health Check-In. Developed in collaboration with mental health experts Rightsteps, this clinically validated tool gives engineers and their families access to personalised mental health support. It's free, quick to use, confidential and available 24/7.

- The tool was used **325** times in 2024–25.
- There were **113** uses in the launch month.
- At first, the age group with the most users was age **56–65** (22%), and **64%** of users were male.
- In June 2025, having expanded our reach onto TikTok, we saw a big uptick in uses, with **53** uses in June alone.
- At the same time, the demographic tipped towards young women, with **57%** of users being female, and **68%** age 25 or under.

Video storytelling

Engaging with new platforms as part of our digital strategy

Over the past year, we've revised our video content strategy to balance long-form and short-form formats. While in-depth interviews continued to serve our established audience, we observed a higher rate of engagement and follow-through from shorter videos, typically around one minute in length.

To ensure we reach as many engineers as possible, rather than waiting for them to find us, we expanded our social media presence beyond our existing channels. After considering the type of content and the profile of the communities on various platforms, we decided to test content on **TikTok, Reddit and Bluesky**.

Our new short format video content aligned particularly well with TikTok and helped deliver increased visibility, attracting users with a clear interest in engineering. Reddit and Bluesky offered us a different opportunity, both being more conversational platforms, to start engaging with clearly defined communities that are harder to target through traditional outreach methods.

We also began producing 'explainer' videos about the different types of support we provide, and how to access them, to help make our support more accessible.

Our focus remains on creating content that is informative, accessible, and engaging. By adjusting our video strategy and exploring new digital platforms, we have positioned ourselves to better serve both existing supporters and new audiences.

Smiley Charity Film Awards

Our long-format ADHD awareness interview with neurodivergent engineer Mikaela Sanchez was a key example of impactful content. The interview was an open and honest account of the impact of ADHD on Mikaela's studies and career.

It was also our first entry into the Smiley Charity Film Awards. Our entry was shortlisted in the long-form, £500k–£5m turnover category and then selected as a finalist in the category.

While we didn't win, being confirmed as a finalist was a credit to both Mikaela's story and the production and editing that went into the video!

Support from our community

- **£968,363** raised, including **£29,913** gift aid, by **2,336** individual donors across **22** countries.
- **1,415** annual givers
- **328** monthly givers
- **66** people in challenge events
- **10** legacy gifts
- **3** corporate collaborations
- **2** grants from trusts and foundations

Support from corporates

We are grateful for the continued support of MJ Quinn and Matchtech, in both their fundraising efforts and their engagement with our resources. We look forward to building more collaborations and relationships with companies in the coming year.

MJ Quinn

In Mental Health Awareness Week 2025, two members of staff at engineering company MJ Quinn took on a 5-day Walk to Work challenge in support of Foothold. Jono and Kev travelled from their hometown of Leicester to MJ Quinn's Head Office in Knowsley, Liverpool to help raise awareness and open conversations around mental wellbeing and connection.

The pair aimed to create a space for staff to come together, have open conversations and remind each other that there is always someone to talk to.

Jono, Senior Operations Manager at MJ Quinn said about the challenge:

“Mental ill health is a silent epidemic, claiming the lives of too many men under the age of 50. This demographic represents a significant portion of our workforce, and in recent years, we have faced the heartbreaking loss of five colleagues who suffered in silence. In an effort to raise awareness and foster open conversations about mental health, we shall be to walking 130 miles to work over five days.”

Each day they uploaded a video diary documenting their travels. It was wonderful to follow their journey and get a glimpse into the scenic route they took. Their efforts didn't go unnoticed – the BBC picked up their story and featured it in the news. Together they raised over £5,000 for Foothold.

A huge thank you to Jono and Kev and the whole team at MJ Quinn for taking on this challenge.

“We believe supporting our people goes beyond the workplace. Partnering with Foothold allows us to offer meaningful support to those facing personal challenges, helping them access the resources they need to thrive. It’s a privilege to stand alongside a charity that shares our values of care, resilience and community.”

Kate, Operations Director – Service Delivery, MJ Quinn

Support from individuals

We’ve received incredible support from the community throughout the year. We rely on donations and gifts in Wills to fund all our work, and our achievements simply wouldn’t be possible without our amazing supporters.

- £189,520 in donations from individuals
- £743,152 received in total from 10 legacy gifts
- £11,980 received from trusts and foundations

Donations

Donations from individuals continue to play a central role in our fundraising. Donations from IET members and others from the engineering community generated **£189,520** this year.

Changes to the donation collection process in the IET membership renewals in late 2023 means that donors now need to donate directly to Foothold instead of alongside their renewals.

We are incredibly grateful for the donors who have chosen to donate directly to Foothold during the year, and for the ongoing support of those who have set up either monthly or annual direct debits with us, giving us certainty about voluntary income to help us plan our support for engineers.

Legacy gifts

We are incredibly grateful for the generosity of those who remember us in their Wills. We were honoured to receive **10** gifts totalling **£743,152** (up from £236,566 in 2023–24).

Sincere thanks to the following people:

Alice Newman

Brian Hardy

Clive Norris

David Crecraft

Kenneth Swinson

Mona Robson
Neil Gilchrist
Percy Gatliff
Peter Cullimore
Ronald Cross

In addition, four people notified Foothold that they have pledged a gift in their Will and we are extremely grateful for their support. These pledges help us with our long-term planning to maximise our support for the engineering community.

Trusts and foundations

We were delighted to receive donations from both the **Optigene Foundation** (£10,000) and **Foundation Lodge 82 - Cheltenham Freemasonry** (£1,980) to fund our work. We would like to thank both for their support.

Our fundraising practices

Foothold recognises the requirements of the Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Act 2016 which contains a range of provisions aimed at raising standards in fundraising. We also voluntarily subscribe to the Fundraising Regulator and all of our fundraisers are expected to work in line with the Code of Fundraising Practice.

We do not employ professional fundraising agencies. We have one relationship with a commercial participator, make a smile lottery, who operate a multi-charity lottery which Foothold joined in June 2025. Prior to entering into that agreement, due diligence was carried out and a comprehensive Commercial Participation Agreement was signed.

We do not undertake door-to-door or face-to-face fundraising, and our direct mail fundraising is only addressed to people who are already known to us.

Aside from our commercial relationship with make a smile lottery, all our fundraising is carried out by our small in-house team. This year there have not been any breaches of regulation or code, and no complaints have been received.

We take particular care to safeguard and protect vulnerable supporters, and our staff receive annual training in this area. We also pay close attention to the changing regulatory environment to ensure our fundraising is transparent, honest and non-intrusive.

It is our practice to keep supporters up to date with the impact their gifts are making. But community members are given the option to control if and how we contact them and we have processes in place to support this. We do not sell our supporters' data and

we do not purchase external data lists.

Support from volunteers

Building on the great work of our volunteers this year, we developed a new video content presenter role. This taps into a new skillset in our community and has attracted several new volunteers.

- **603** total volunteer hours in 2024–25, delivered by committee members, local reps, volunteers and Trustees.

How you helped us make a difference

Whether you've contributed to our appeals, made a regular donation, taken part in a challenge event or left a gift in your Will – every time you raise money for Foothold, you're helping to improve the wellbeing of the engineering community. Thank you for supporting us. Your generosity really does make a big difference

What we generated

- £743,152 in legacies
- £375,052 in investment income
- £189,520 in donations
- £22,933 in grant income
- £12,758 in events and sundry
- **Total raised: £1,575,480**

What we spent

- £728,473 on financial support
- £261,333 on raising funds
- £185,625 on online support
- £39,184 on neurodiversity support
- **Total spent: £1,214,515**

“Foothold can give you stability and support, and not just in the moment. No matter the support you get, it makes a huge difference. They have changed Tristan’s life as well as my own – they may be able to do the same for you.”

Pauline, Foothold Community Member

Foothold

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