

1913



1959



2023



Although some things change over time, the need for help remains, and people often find it difficult to ask or reach out.

If that applies to you or a loved one, please do contact us, we will listen and work with you to make things better. If you know someone who is struggling, with their mental or physical wellbeing or changed life circumstances, please encourage them to get in touch. Nobody needs to face problems alone, and our help is at hand.

Your intervention could make all the difference.

Trustees, Officials & Professional Advisers 2023

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Deputy Chair

Farah Baksh (from August 2023)

Treasurer

Andrew Rowland CEng MIMechE

Other Trustees

John Cornforth CEng MIMechE
(until July 2023)

Bob Cuthbertson CEng MIMechE
(from October 2023)

Tony Frater CEng MIMechE

Jodie Howlett EngTech MIMechE

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Anni Broadhead

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Devonshire House, 60 Goswell
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Broadway, London SW1H 0BL

Property Solicitors

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London EC4M 7AN

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76-80 Morningside Road
Edinburgh EH10 4BY

Investment Managers

CCLA Investment Management
Cordea Savills LLP
Fidelity International
M&G Investments
Schroder & Co Ltd

Support Network

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Company No. 130981

SUPPORT NETWORK

Institution of
**MECHANICAL
ENGINEERS**



SUPPORTING OUR ENGINEER COMMUNITY FOR 110 YEARS

Annual Review 2023

Patron: His Royal Highness King Charles III

SUPPORT NETWORK

Institution of MECHANICAL ENGINEERS

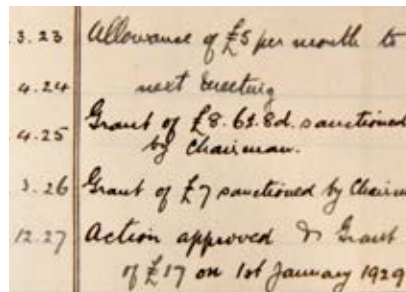
SUPPORTING OUR ENGINEER COMMUNITY FOR 110 YEARS



Whatever the times, Support Network is there to help and connect with members.

“occasional provision of small comforts”

Last year marked the 110th anniversary of Support Network. Since 1913 we have assisted members of the IMechE and their families, helping them to face and overcome unexpected circumstances in their lives. Established long before the creation of the welfare state, Support Network, known as the benevolent fund then (and until recent times) was undoubtedly a significant safety net for members who were injured in conflict, developed chronic health conditions or who sadly passed, leaving widows and children otherwise without support. Extracts from our early case records - written long hand with a fountain pen into a leather bound tome – shines a light onto social conditions of the time, and the response that came from the benevolent fund: “...a small monthly allowance to a member 72 years old, without work, savings or means...”; and a member who became increasingly physically impaired due to rheumatism who helped to move into a medical home once he could no longer manage his condition alone, with Support Network



paying the maintenance fees plus the “...occasional provision of small comforts”.

Support Network continues to care in an holistic way, with the provision of services and specialist support in addition to grants and loans. The past decade in particular has seen the development of new services including counselling (online, telephone and face to face);

dyslexia, ADHD and autism support; employment coaching; parenting helpline to embed our core activity areas of improving our mental health interventions; enabling engineering careers, with particular reference to students, newly qualified and STEM returners; establishing a foundation funding activity to improve lives through engineering; and placing diversity and inclusion at the heart of all that we do.

In 2023 we were increasingly aware of our global membership, with most of our student assistance being to those members who were studying outside of the UK, plus the expansion of our lunchtime webinar offerings to include wellbeing, financial, and family themes further increased our reach and brought members closer to our work, utilising technology that was far beyond the imaginings of our founders.



Meet the team (L-R): Maureen Hayes, Laura Clyne, Andrew Dodsworth, Anni Broadhead.



“I’ve got a lot more freedom now – this bike and your support has been truly liberating”

Mr Fry, an IMechE member, contacted us for assistance to help purchase a bespoke recumbent bicycle for his wife. Following health difficulties she was no longer able to use her regular bicycle and very much missed being able to join her husband and children on family outings. She also wanted to be able to accompany the younger children on their journey to and from school. She said that not being able to fully participate in these family times had left her feeling excluded and very low. As Support Network also assists the close relatives of members we were able to respond, and worked to ensure that the bicycle was available in time for the Easter holidays, so that it could be of maximum impact in the shortest time. During the personal visit to understand more about her needs, it became clear that Mrs Fry had started to wonder whether she might be autistic, as that would

explain many of the challenges she had faced as a consequence of the family needing to relocate several times for work and to keep starting over. As Support Network helps in a variety of ways, we were able to offer a referral assessment for Mrs Fry and access to specialist peer groups. This also inspired us to expand the neurodiversity support that we offer, and a more in depth service to support autism, ADHD and dyslexia needs was introduced in 2023. This was a good example of how spending time, and especially talking face to face, can often lead to identifying issues other than those that were first presented. Support Network is now one of the few organisations in our sector that use this model, and we do so as we feel that membership matters. Mr and Mrs Fry have kindly given their permission for us to write this article.

“I don’t know how I would’ve managed without your help”

When Rachel’s partner was diagnosed with a serious health condition (thankfully now resolved), her world suddenly “turned upside down”. As a family they faced an uncertain future, managing bills on a single income, trying to keep to school routines, holding her work together, worrying about what might be coming next. Support Network provided breathing space grant assistance and additional help during the school holidays, and kept a ready listening ear. We also intervened to ensure that



overdue heating repairs were finally undertaken by her landlord: “When everything fell apart and it was so overwhelming there was always the contact from the volunteer Visitor, telephone calls, texts, just knowing



Three current Trustees: (L-R) Jodie Howlett, Bob Cuthbertson (Deputy), Farah Baksh (Acting Chair).

Trustee view: Bob Cuthbertson

Why did I join the board?

I have been a Support Network volunteer since 2010, undertaking visits and helping with case requests. The organisation is managed by a small and dedicated team, who deserve all the support I can offer. The Trustee Board is similar – a diverse group of very committed individuals – currently representing many aspects of the IMechE membership. Hence it was an easy decision to say ‘yes’ when the opportunity to join the Board arose in 2023, and there have been no regrets.

Impressions to date?

All the people involved are very approachable. Similarly, the processes and procedures used to make decisions on who and how to support are very considered and logical, with room to shape to the individual; it’s all very inspiring.

Future activities for Support Network?

The challenges facing the organisation are all positive – how and where to develop our services and foundation funding reach – in short, how to do more of our needed work and share more of our resources doing so! Effective communication is key. We aim to be globally inclusive and prioritise reaching those starting their post-education IMechE membership. We anticipate Africa and Asia leading the way, continuing to help improve mental and physical wellbeing and ideally investing in engineering innovation for social good.

that there was someone there for us. It wasn’t just the practical help and grants that made such a difference, it was how you did this that mattered so much; you made kindness so very meaningful. I don’t know how I would’ve managed without your help and your caring interest in me and my family – we will never forget that.”

IMPROVING LIVES WORLDWIDE

SUPPORT NETWORK

Institution of
**MECHANICAL
ENGINEERS**

Support Network continues to be proud of the foundation funding work that we began in 2020. This stream of our work enables us to reach and have a positive impact upon many more people and their potential engineering futures. After three complete years of operation, Support Network has made 13 awards to organisations working in a STEM related way in the areas of international development, education and/or engineering innovation – areas which also align with the objectives of the IMechE – with the amount granted being almost £400K.

The impact of this has been significant and rewarding.

The foundation funding project activity undertaken in 2023 included the construction of a suspended trail bridge in Nyacyonga, Rwanda. Support Network partnered with Bridges to Prosperity and local residents, to install a bridge that would serve five communities in the Kicukro District by connecting them to health care, government service, markets as well as primary and secondary schools. Due to the river often flooding in the rainy season, or the force of the water weakening the previous log bridge, children and adults alike were either putting their lives in jeopardy through attempting unsafe crossings



Enjoying crossing the new safe bridge at Nyacyonga – a gateway to opportunities.

“When it rained the children could not go to school and we could not leave our home until the sun came out”

or were simply going without access to education or medical assistance. As a consequence, many community members were injured or sadly lost their lives. The certainty of the crossing has started to lead to social and economic stability, with improved incomes, lives, and futures.

“Before the bridge we used to cross in a very unsafe place. When it rained the children could not go to school and we could not leave our home until the sun came out and dried the path. Now

thanks to the bridge, no one will have to worry about crossing the river, plus the hospital and the market can be reached. Thank you so much!”

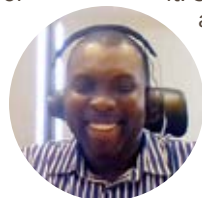
Through this work and partnership, Support Network has been able to add two more SDGs to those that we were previously contributing to, representing assistance now in 11 of the 17 goals (see below):



How we help the next generation of engineers to complete their studies

Support Network plays an integral part in assisting student members to not only complete their studies but to also progress into their mechanical engineering careers. We provide hardship grants to IMechE members who are undergraduates, Masters students or Apprentices, and prioritise those in their final year or stage.

Help is available on a global basis, and in 2023 we received many applications from students in Nigeria. We are indebted to our international Trustee, Chukwumaoge Onunkwo (*right*), himself Nigerian,



who was able to provide an in-country assessment as to differing needs and to offer suggestions as to the best way to help individuals. As a result we developed a new model of working directly with the academic institutions in order to ensure that our help reaches those who most need it. Our Newly Qualified fund assists members in their first 3 years of their careers to meet transitional costs of relocating, setting up home and taking their first steps.

“I’m so proud of all that I’ve achieved, I didn’t think graduating was within reach and now I have a degree and my first job in engineering! I am so very grateful for your belief in me”

Financial assistance included:

10 Newly Qualified grants to help with first steps in STEM careers

200 Student and Apprentice grants (21 in 2022), awarded to international and UK based mechanical engineering students

145 'Breathing space' grants to help members pay essential bills in times of transition or unanticipated circumstances

183 Fuel and Winter Warmth grants given to either those on fixed incomes or households with disabled and/or vulnerable members

Wellbeing support included:

19 respite breaks for carers and other care costs grants

74 counselling grants to help manage mental health difficulties or past traumas

115 social visits, calls and online contact made by our volunteers

Practical help included:

7 health, disability, autism & dyslexia related costs or access to specialist support

18 sleep support programmes provide to tackle the underlying causes of poor sleep

39 employment coaching and CV specialist referrals to help members regain work

160 callers used the legal helpline & downloadable factsheets for advice on tax, probate and housing matters

International grants included:

1 plastic additive machine purchased to help recycle retrieved beach plastic into goods (Kenya)

63 young people participating in small business start ups in tuk-tuk repair and micro finance (Uganda)

350 pupils receiving enhanced STEM lessons through ENTHUSE partnerships (UK)

“Reaching out for help was the hardest part, but I’m so glad that I did. Thank you for everything.”

Colin contacted us when he was made redundant after working for the same engineering company for 25 years. Whilst losing his job was a shock, it was nothing compared to the mental impact that developed over the following months of unemployment. He found the recruitment process to be very different when he had last applied for a position and Colin found his lack of purpose was difficult to manage. We referred him to our employment coaching specialists who provided technical help on how to navigate the digital job market, and also identified the need for talking therapies to help address impaired self esteem, which Support Network was able to source. Through his counselling, Colin realised that although his redundancy was not fault based, it had nevertheless triggered deep feelings from younger years which were hampering his best attempts to move forward. Colin persisted with this therapy and employment coaching and now has a



new position, joined the running club at his new employment and is “...in a much better place. I’ve come a long way since those early difficult days. Reaching out for help was the hardest part, but I’m so glad that I did. Thank you for everything.”

To discuss how we might be able to help you,

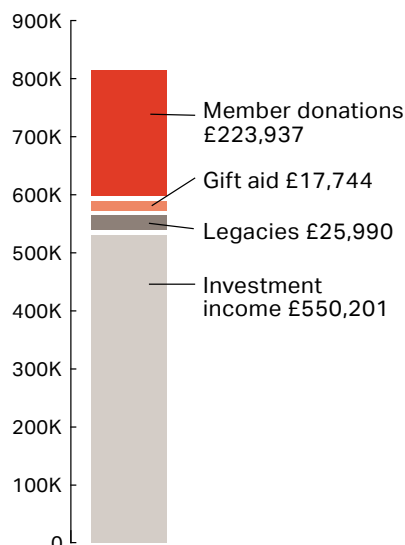
or for more about us email supportnetwork@imeche.org

or text/Whatsapp/call/leave a message on **07552 669160**

www.imeche.org/supportnetwork

Income

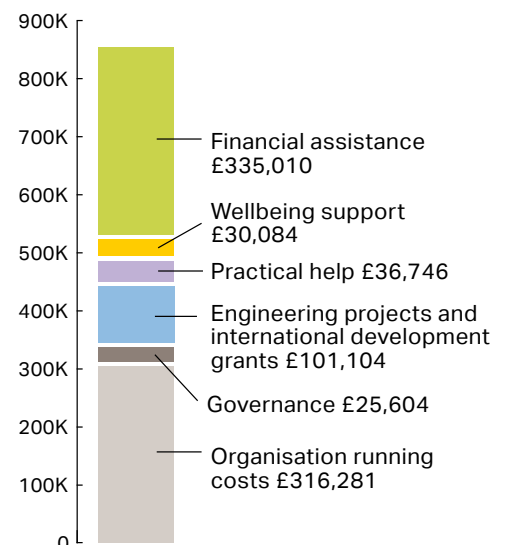
Total £817,872



Expenditure

Total £844,829

Total grant support to members £401,840



To view the full 2023 financial accounts and activities report visit www.imeche.org/support-network/governance