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Tackling youth inequality by fuelling courageous leadership

Welcome to our annual newsletter which we hope you will enjoy and which you will be receiving because you have at some point shown support and interest for the Shackleton Foundation - should you no longer wish to receive this you will find the unsubscribe button at the end.

The First Mile

We continue to seed-fund and support social entrepreneurs who not only exemplify the spirit of Ernest Shackleton but who are leading change and breaking down barriers to opportunity for young people across the UK.

Each year we receive hundreds of applications for initiatives focussing on Education, Life Skills and Employability, Physical and Mental Health, Youth Offending, Community and Social Welfare, and our voluntary board of exceptional Trustees to whom I am most grateful, offer independent and unbiased review of these, selecting only a few to become Shackleton Leaders. 73 to date carry that title and we are humbled by their endeavours and resilience, you can read about the latest awardees featured later on.

The first year of establishing a social venture is probably the hardest, what we call the 'first mile', so our contribution really matters to ensure this potential to drive lasting change isn't lost, particularly as not many other funders are able to take the same risks without first having proof of concept. Our latest [impact report](#), recently published and also featured later on, reassures us of our purpose and evidences the effectiveness of the Foundation.

Critical to our existence is fundraising, and we are extremely grateful to The Oak Foundation, The Bernard Sunley Foundation, The Headley Trust and Saints & Sinners as well as some private donors, for their incredible support through this past year. On a recent trip to the archive at Dulwich College I had the privilege of reading one of Shackleton's own letters fundraising for one of his many expeditions and appreciate it is as challenging now as it was then to maintain momentum, so appreciate any introductions, awareness and donations that you can help us with, either by using [this link](#) or by contacting us at info@shackletonfoundation.org.

I hope you enjoy reading our news and for your support, *Charlotte Hatfield*, Chair of Trustees

NEW LEADERS 2024/25



Sarah Sudea (£10,000 Loan)

Sarah is a former secondary school teacher, mum to 3 daughters and founder of Finding the Flex: a social enterprise aiming to widen access to flexischooling for UK school children. Finding the Flex was borne from her first hand experience of the benefits of a more flexible approach to education. Finding the Flex now helps local authorities and schools offer flexischooling, so every child can thrive in education.

Thanks to the Shackleton loan, Sarah will be focusing on proof of concept – demonstrating that flexischooling improves educational engagement for children (particularly those with SEND, at risk of EBSNA or at risk of being de-registered entirely) and improves wellbeing for parents/carers and school staff.



Tom Hague (£10,000 Grant)

Tom believes passionately in the power of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu - the UK's fastest growing martial art - to change young people's lives. Tom saw the unique potential of BJJ to support young people's physical and mental health. So he started Rise Community Jiu-Jitsu - the UK's first social enterprise for BJJ!

Rise sets up affordable and impactful programmes that engage disadvantaged young people in London, Bristol and beyond. Through the physical activity, wraparound support and youth employability offers of these 'flagship' programmes, Rise improves young people's physical and mental health and provides meaningful work experience. Rise aims to create a long-term blueprint of BJJ for greater good.



Robert Dickinson (£2,500 Grant)

Robert Dickinson started Croydon ParkBox in 2024 following a summer of carrying half a tonne of toys and books to the park with his son to play with. Set within the context of almost 1 million UK children not having a single book at home, only 25% of children playing outside regularly the cost-of-living crisis, he wanted to find a way for others to enjoy what Robert and his son did. Play, read, bond in public parks.

In collaboration with the Shackleton Foundation Robert is launching a pilot scheme to trial public ParkBoxes to test the sustainability, reach underserved young people with high quality resources and inspire a love of books and play. These ParkBoxes act as mini-libraries with books, toys and sports equipment in Croydon's parks - completely free for everyone to use.



Cynthia Lai (£15,000 Grant)

Neurodivergent and a parent of a child with autism, Cynthia Lai founded Ella Support Loop to make the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) system kinder, clearer, and easier to navigate for families, schools, and local authorities alike. With over 25 years' experience leading data, AI strategy and digital transformation projects, Cynthia combines technical expertise with lived experience to build technology people can trust.

Thanks to the Shackleton Foundation grant, Cynthia will be able to develop the tool which helps parents access reliable, relevant SEND information tailored to their situation. By giving families clearer pathways and professionals better insights, Ella helps prevent crises, reduces escalation, and keeps more children safe and supported within their communities.

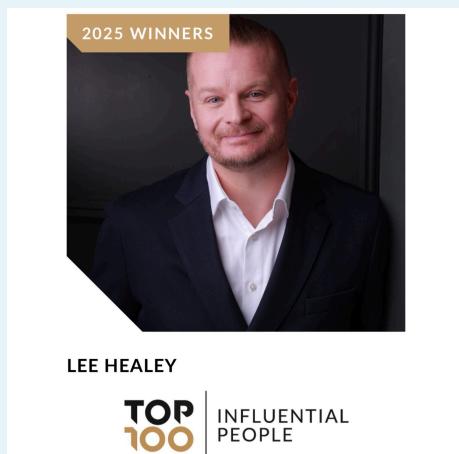
LEADERS' NEWS

In October Shackleton Leader Joel Dunn appeared on Crimewatch Live to share the story behind Paradigm Project — how it began, the impact of their work, and their vision for the future. It was a fantastic opportunity to shine a light on the urgent need for upstream solutions to youth and education challenges. Watch Joel's

(Crimewatch Live, Wednesday 22nd October episode)



Testament to how amazing our Shackleton Leaders are we would like to congratulate the following: Sarah Waite founder of (Get Further) for being shortlisted for the Charity Awards in 2025; Sammy Everard (SAMEE) and Celia Hodson (Hey Girls) were part of the [NatWest SE100 list](#); Sonia Shaljean (Lads need Dads) for being awarded a Churchill Fellowship and Lee Healey (Income Max) for being voted one of 2025's Top 100 influential people. In January 2026 Josh Babarinde (Cracked it) takes up the position of President of the Liberal Democrats.





Christy Acton
Founder & CEO
Standing Tall

A leader recognised for combining profit and purpose

EY, Hospit Love 100, FORSTER COMMUNICATIONS, GREEN CAPITAL, KCV, THE POSTMAN ESTATE

Christy Acton Founder and CEO of Standing Tall has had an incredibly successful year. In June Christy was awarded a British Empire Medal in the Kings Honours List. Standing Tall won the 2025 NatWest SE100 Pioneering Newcomer Award, the SME and VCSE award at the Social Value Awards and Christy has been recognised as one of the 2025 Meaningful Business 100, alongside other leaders delivering scalable, real-world solutions to complex social and environmental challenges. What a year!

Whilst we are delighted to confirm that over 84% of Leaders are still operating their social enterprise 10 years later a number of wonderful projects have also closed their doors. Phoebe Praill from [The Bridging project](#) closed this year after beginning in 2019 as a small pilot. During this time they have supported 200 students from underrepresented backgrounds to thrive at University.

The Luna Foundation also closed its doors after 3 years and Anna Wardley held a really valuable legacy event and issued a report celebrating everything that had been achieved and sharing best practice. [Beyond the Darkness: Luna legacy report by Anna Wardley - Issuu](#)

Anna has since then also spoken at the first Ted X Gosport event with her power talk 'When the Tide Turns' Watch it here. [TED X Talk](#)

Dan Sutch was our guest speaker for this year's Leader's Forum. Dan is the Director of the Centre for the Acceleration of Social Technology ([CAST](#)) - an organisation set to drive social change through digital technology.

Dan opened the session by discussing AI which has seen a dramatic and unprecedented uptake which can leave many of us feeling it is happening too fast. Dan encouraged Leaders to think about the new behaviours that are created as a result of technology. He went on to discuss how think about AI and suggested we think about AI 'like unlimited interns' - it enables smaller organisations to act like much larger companies. Whilst there is no limit to the work - you need to be responsible for setting the direction of the work. Remember the audience of 'one'. Who is proud of what you are creating? It is key remember '**people plus tools**'.

Dan asked Leaders to think about how you are communicating what you do? Existing information can be turned into different forms. A deck can become a podcast, it can be translated into different languages. How does the technology help you reach more people? What are the things that take up your time? Can you shift the things that you are doing and enable AI to help?

This was an incredibly thought provoking forum. Dan provided such a balanced, thoughtful approach to using AI and encouraged us all to use it to amplify our voices and be part of the conversation.

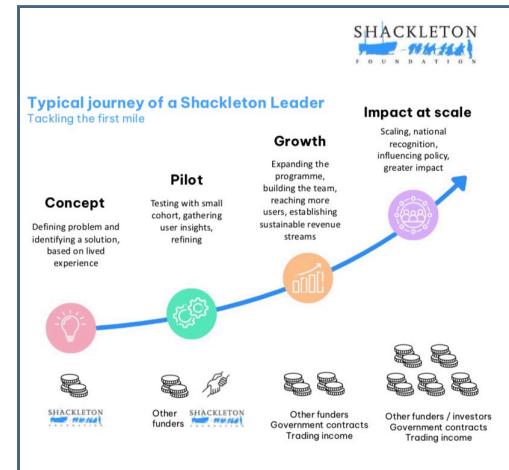
IMPACT REPORT

Thanks for the comprehensive work of fellow trustee Plum Lomax who brings together all the data and turns it into a compelling narrative, we are delighted to share the latest Shackleton Foundation [impact report](#) published every 3 years.

Impact reports are a valuable indication of a charity's effectiveness, ensuring that they remain true to their purpose, and this makes us extremely proud of the work that we do, confirming that our support really matters.

Our impact - highlights

- Awarded over £700,000 in seed funding and repayable loans since 2008
- Supported 73 Shackleton Leaders, 43% have lived experience of the issues they are tackling



- 84% of Leaders still operating (of those funded since 2015) a remarkable rate of longevity for early-stage social enterprises
- Seen each Leader (since 2015) support an average of 1,600 children and young people in the three years after our award

OUR SUPPORTERS



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Charlotte Hatfield (Chair)

Stephanie Wheen

Karen Kwong

Plum Lomax

Paul Gunstensen

Administrator

Victoria Cushing

tel.07765631000

Ambassadors

Josh Babarinde OBE

Dave Cornell

Tim Fright

Richard Gray

Abel Hadden

Lorraine Kelly OBE

Anton Oliver

Bill Shipton

Rebecca Stephens MBE

The Shackleton Foundation, 2 Communications Road, Greenham Business Park, Newbury,
Berkshire, RG19 6AB info@shackletonfoundation.org



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