

CASE STUDY

TRANSFORMATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

INTRODUCTION

Refuge has long been a beacon of hope for survivors of domestic abuse. With a mission to create a world where violence against women and girls is no longer tolerated, Refuge supports over 7,000 survivors every day through a national network of refuges, advocacy services, and outreach programmes. Their National Domestic Abuse Helpline is a vital lifeline, handling over 270 calls daily.



When the pandemic struck, demand for Refuge's services skyrocketed. Calls to their helpline surged by 66%, and website visits increased by an incredible 950%. In response, their fundraising team launched an emergency appeal, setting an ambitious but necessary target of £150,000. The public's response was overwhelming—Refuge raised over £1.2 million.

CHALLENGE

The success of the campaign came with a challenge - managing an unprecedented volume of donations and supporter data from across Engaging Networks and Raiser's Edge efficiently and sustainably. Dimitris Mandiliotis, Database Manager at Refuge, and his team knew that their existing donation processing system simply couldn't keep pace with the scale of support they were receiving.

In just one year, their financial transaction volume grew from 78,000 in 2019/20 to 382,000 in 2020/21—an almost fivefold increase. Their existing system relied on seven separate Microsoft Access databases, each requiring manual updates and maintenance. Every change to Engaging Networks or Raiser's Edge meant adjusting multiple databases, a time-consuming and increasingly unmanageable task.

Beyond efficiency, accuracy was paramount. Donations had to be classified correctly based on a range of criteria, including:

- Utilise major donor thresholds
- Special tracking IDs for in-memory donations
- Custom coding for different campaign pages
- A default classification for unassigned donations

With their move to Raiser's Edge NXT and the shift to remote working, the time had come for a new approach—one that was automated, adaptable, and designed for long-term success. That's where Actually Data, with their deep expertise in Engaging Networks and Raiser's Edge, stepped in to collaborate with Refuge and build a future-proofed data solution.

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OUR PROCESS



SOLUTION

Refuge didn't just need a service provider; they needed a data partner who understood the unique pressures of the charity sector. Actually Data brought their extensive knowledge of Engaging Networks, fundraising operations, and database management to the table, working hand in hand with Refuge's internal teams to co-create a solution that was not just technically sound but practical, scalable, and intuitive for their fundraising and supporter care teams.

The solution was designed in two key phases:

Phase 1: Intelligent Data Staging & Automation

Actually Data reimagined Refuge's income processing, replacing their fragmented Access database system with a powerful Excel-based staging system powered by Power Query. This approach ensured:

- ▶ Automated data cleansing, ensuring uniform formatting for supporter names and phone numbers.
- ▶ Seamless integration with Loqate's Batch Cleanse API, validating and standardising addresses for improved accuracy.
- ▶ Smart donation categorisation, using lookup tables to automatically apply correct income codes—eliminating manual intervention and reducing errors.

Phase 2: Seamless Import & Optimisation with Raiser's Edge

Once cleaned and categorised, the data was effortlessly imported into Raiser's Edge using ImportOmatic, enabling:

- ▶ Custom import profiles for different transaction types (e.g. Direct Debits, one-off gifts, campaign donations, consent records).
- ▶ Automated deduplication, preventing duplicate donor records and ensuring supporter data remained clean.
- ▶ Minimal manual adjustments, meaning the process could run smoothly without the need for constant oversight.

What made this process stand out was the close partnership between Refuge, Actually Data, and Engaging Networks. By working as an integrated team, they co-designed a system that didn't just meet technical requirements but also aligned with Refuge's fundraising goals and supporter engagement strategy.

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THE RESULTS



RESULT

The results of this collaboration were nothing short of transformational, empowering Refuge to focus on fundraising:



76% reduction in processing time

Daily processing time dropped from 82 minutes to just 20 minutes, freeing up valuable staff time.



Stronger data integrity

Standardised imports meant more reliable records, reducing errors and inconsistencies.



Scalability for the future

The new system adapts to Refuge's evolving needs, ensuring sustainable growth in their fundraising efforts.



Empowered internal teams

With a streamlined, automated process, both database managers and supporter care teams can confidently manage and update donation data without requiring deep technical expertise.

CONCLUSION

This wasn't just a technology project—it was a strategic shift in how Refuge handles supporter data. By moving away from manual, disjointed processes and towards automation, accuracy, and integration, Refuge has unlocked new potential for their fundraising operations.

This transformation wouldn't have been possible without the true spirit of collaboration between Refuge, Actually Data, and Engaging Networks. By working in partnership, we built a solution that is practical, scalable, whilst aligning with Refuge's mission and allowing them to focus on what truly matters – supporting survivors and driving meaningful change.



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