The RAF Benevolent Fund & Access: **Driving engagement with seamless UX.**

BIMA

Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund ✕ access.

Project Synopsis.

The RAF Benevolent Fund (RAFBF) offers welfare support to veterans and serving Royal Air Force personnel, and their families.

Access was appointed by the charity in 2020 to design and build a new web platform with the objective of driving greater on-site engagement and actions, including requests for support, online donations, and fundraising initiatives.

Their website caters for multiple audiences: those seeking support and those wishing to provide support. Wanting their site to work harder, Access was briefed to a)make finding the right support easier, b) drive more online donations.

Through our in-depth user research and journey mapping, we identified that better navigation would not only increase the number of people able to access the charity's services, but it would also make donating much quicker and simpler too. Now, at the top of the page, visitors can hit 'Support Finder' or 'Donate' and reach their desired content much faster.

Combining that membership insight with innovative technical solutions such as a Support Finder tool, a Progressive Web App and backend CRM data integration support - the new website launched in late 2021 and now drives better onsite engagement as a result.

In-depth Project Explanation.

In June 2020, Access was awarded the contract for the new RAF Benevolent Fund (RAFBF) website, to design and build a new web platform with the objective of driving greater on-site engagement and actions, including requests for support, online donations, and fundraising initiatives.

Key to the brief was to carry out user research to define how the desired 'one-stop shop supporter journey' could work and ensuring that the site delivered a really seamless user experience for the charity.

Other objectives:

• Improved information architecture

• An effortless and best-in-class user experience

• Improved performance and site speed

• An enhanced and improved beneficiary and supporter journey

• Greater user engagement and site actions

• An increase in return visitors

• Greater efficiency in creation of web pages / management of media assets

Project delivery

The new website went live on 7th December 2021 and it was built on Drupal 8 (now on Drupal 9), an upgrade from the Drupal 7 CMS and delivers an enhanced user journey for two distinct audiences; supporters and beneficiaries.

It introduces innovative technical features that support key objectives, including removing barriers to information and assistance for those who are less tech savvy, driving greater engagement and creating a more intuitive user journey.

Delivering a seamless intuitive user journey

We put the users at the heart of the initial discovery phase, gathering insights directly from real users through in-depth interviews and research, building audience personas in the process. These insights identified the need for simpler ways in which the audience could find the help they were looking for.

This led to us creating a 'Support Finder Tool'. A step by step question and answer journey, it helps the user access the information they need with ease and no complication, enabling all site visitors to find the pages most relevant to them, whether that be a beneficiary form or a number to call for help and support.

The combined Vue JS, Drupal and Custom Module tool has been made available on most pages where the standard 'header' is revealed and opens in a modal-like tool on top of the existing browsed page. Alongside it at the top of the page, visitors can also click 'Support Finder' or 'Donate' CTAs and reach their desired content much faster.
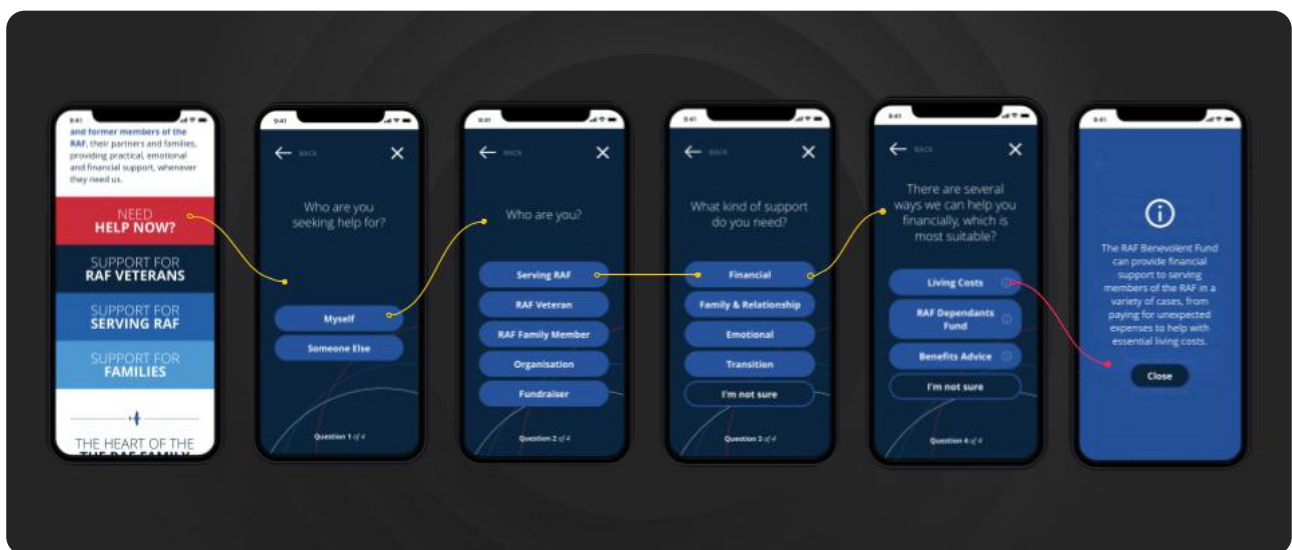

Inbuilt flexibility for effective sub-brand support and efficient content creation

The RAFBF runs a handful of sub-brands with specific causes and contain alternative brand colours (RAF Widows' Association, the RAF Disabled Holiday Trust and the Alexander Duckham Memorial Schools Trust). We utilised a flexible component design system to create efficiencies and to deliver ease-of-use to site editors working across the design of different sub-brands.

Using a component library has also meant greater efficiency in the creation of web pages and the management of media assets for the main website too as through using brand governed content components, editors can build pages to spec and get to market at pace.

Improved accessibility was an important part of the new site too and has been designed to AA standard.
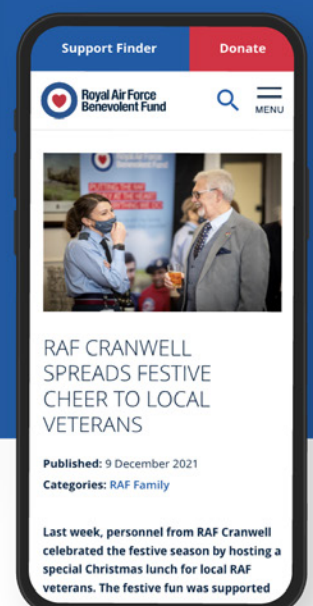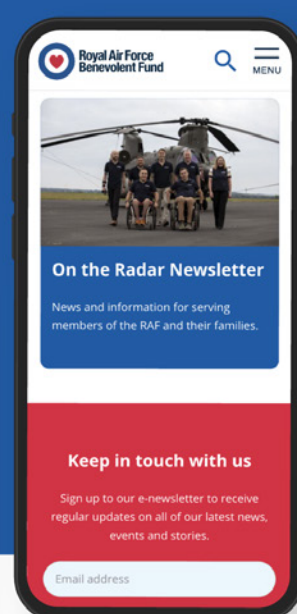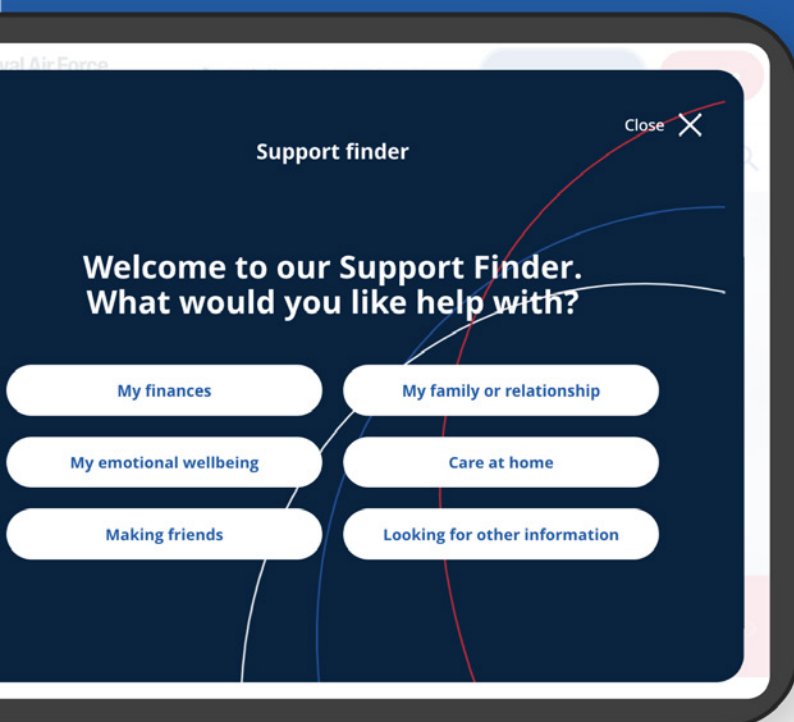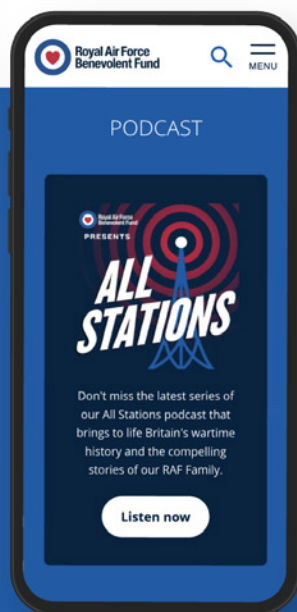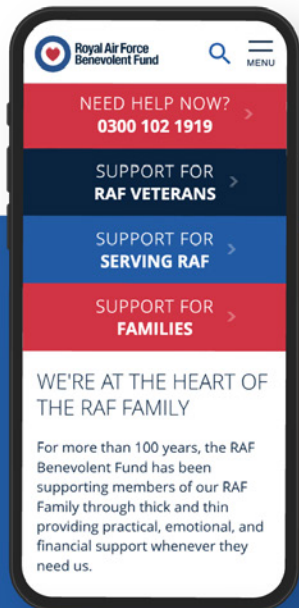
Supporting engagement and retention through a PWA

We built a Progressive Web App (PWA) feature to achieve their goal of retaining supporters and donors. The PWA encourages retention through a variety of features. Using this app means visitors can view offline cached pages, so they can keep on browsing even without an internet connection. This results in uninterrupted customer journeys, promoting longer active session durations and in turn increasing the chance of donation or supporter journey completion.

The PWA contains both "add to home screen" as well as "push notifications" features encouraging return visitors to save the content they want so they can find what they're looking for quicker (a shortcut to a support page or a quicker way to donate) and be kept up to date with the latest content.

Improving security and workflows

The RAFBF beneficiary form is a tool to apply for financial assistance for members of the RAF Family. To replace an existing offline application process, we built a new system to capture application information via a web form and store any collected data in CareNG CRM. This improved both the security of the data that was being handled and also improved the backend workflow through automation.

The new webform also allows for attachments that will be downloadable within Drupal, such as Proof of ID and Bank statements, which speeds up the process to receive financial assistance and keeps the process all in one place.

Results

Bounce rate decreases from 64.38% to **60.55%***

96% reduction in 404 errors*

6% increase in average session duration*

11.4% increase in average session duration from returning users*

Drop in bounce rate from returning users - 64.1% to **58.8%***

13.8% rise in total mobile/ tablet average session duration*

65% increase in "Request our help" form submissions**

*Period between 7/12/20 - 31/05/21 vs 7/12/21 - 31/05/22. **Period between 23/03/21 - 31/05/21 vs 23/03/22 - 31/05/22*

Client quote

"Through in-depth audience research and user feedback we have created a web platform that will better meet the needs of all of our audiences. Our website serves two core functions, and we've facilitated the best user journeys for each.

"For those wanting to support us, the means to donate or get involved in fundraising is a much simpler, audience-focused journey. We've developed a suite of features that will help us to build stronger ongoing relationships with supporters, and promote advocacy to get involved with us.

"For those that need support, we've expanded our services to beneficiaries and improved accessibility to our resources so that they are clear and easy to find. Our new site also hosts an array of content so being able to access this in a more intuitive way is a huge step forward."

In summary

From building innovative technical solutions, combined with in-depth user insight, we have built a charity website that has better backend efficiency, improved website performance and increased user engagement.

access.