The problem we’ve looked to start overcoming is time consuming, manual coding of qualitative data from our supporter surveys. As an organisation that is driven by relationship fundraising – bringing supporter voice and insight from supporters’ perspective to the organisations is key to do both quickly and confidently, especially in response to emergency & disaster appeals which are happening around the world more often.

Part of our work in the Voice of the Supporter team has been to focus on analysing open text data using LLM/AI as one of the solutions to our challenge. We’ve been using this technology to benefit the organisation for the last couple of years. It also us to process contextual themes that we have trained to be accurate and unique to our business with our expertise of supporters. It allows us to quickly quantify qualitative data, saving us time to focus on digging deeper. With this data we can then look at trends over time (seasonality and response to media/news), sentiment and compare to other data sets (for example to other emergency appeals). The data used is anonymous feedback from solicited surveys that we ask them to complete. The data sources are owned by us, as we input the data we can trust that the insights that come out are reliable. In terms of bias, WordNerds (the platform we have partnered with) have built the platform to ensure it meets all of our compliancy needs. We are always looking to be as transparent in how we are utilising supporter data with the best interests of our supporters in mind.

Our feedback surveys are optional for supporters to fill out. We comply with research, GDPR and fundraising regulations. From time to time we will target particular audience groups to complete a survey, this is usually in relation to an action a group have or have not taken with us and are otherwise open to all. Being human centred in our approach is vital – the aim of our surveys is to better understand and be able to empathise with our supporters. For example, what matters to them, how they feel about us and how we might improve from their perspective.

We are working hard to quantify the value of better understanding supporters. Our supporter experience is built in shifting culture, purposefully designing experiences and listening to supporter voice.
It's been witnessed that when supporters needs, interests and world is better understood, engagement and income raised is heightened. One example of a time where we’ve used supporter voice was during the Türkiye-Syria earthquake appeal. Initially, the WordNerds platform helped us to quickly analyse the response, providing marketers and fundraisers with access to a report 48 hours after the launch of the emergency appeal – this showcased the motivations behind donations, how they heard about the appeal and how likely they were to recommend supporting BRC to others. The motivations as open text are contextual, so our purpose built bespoke motivational framework allowed us to review themes by 7 top level topics, such as, Humanitarian Reasons and Trust & Confidence in the BRC. And then beneath this sub level themes, for example, to help people or the reputation of the charity. Beyond this, as the team were planning what communications to share with supporters, we asked supporters to share any questions they had about what was happening and the response of the movement. The WordNerds platform again helped us to analyse and group topics, unearthing the most popular themes rapidly. Equipped with this information, the team were able to adapt communications to topics of most interest to our audience that had shared. This, alongside the approach to the email programme, being human, action focused, relevant and honest - resulted in an open rate of over 50% of this follow up email and income raised of £35k in this email alone.

In our small team, we’ve learnt a lot during our journey with the Wordnerds platform so far, we see this as an ongoing partnership to evolve. There has been investment, both in terms of our subscription but also time and consideration in building our framework, transforming data, creating reports and insight to share back for action. As the world changes, our supporters change, and we must change too. As such it’s of vital importance that we monitor the performance and accuracy of our frameworks. We must seek out gap from the unknowns and nuances of different appeals. And we can look to a future where we link up different data sources to have one-source of truth from our supporter perspective e.g. collating anonymous comments from social media, complaints etc. A future where we have champions of supporter voice sprinkled across the organisation for a further aligned overall customer experience (beyond fundraising & marketing alone, encompassing areas like retail, volunteering and people experience). Overall, we want to see a future where the British Red Cross is driven further by supporter experience and needs so that we can help more people in crisis.