Database comparisons (work in progress December 2020)

Product	How it works	Pros	Cons	One thing you should know…
The big players				
Microsoft Dynamics 365	These are three of the big players and most often discussed in the charity-database world. Some confusion persists about whether these systems are free and if they are the answer to all your needs. It is true that these systems are very powerful and you can run all or most of your business functions through them such as fundraising, membership, volunteers, case management and even things like finance, HR and events. They can sing and dance and do anything that you programme them to do. That can have its pros and cons. These are complex systems with big potential so you will need support with implementing and maintaining these systems (unless you have in-house programming knowledge). So, even if you don't have to pay for the system, you will need to pay for support. Salesforce is free for the first 10 licenses. But you will need to enlist a 'Consulting Partner' from their network. Microsoft Dynamics 365 isn't free. The cost varies depending how you use it and you'll also need to work with a 'Nonprofit Partner'. Civi CRM is fee to use. But you will need to hire an 'Expert' from their providers list. So, the two questions you need to ask yourself are: do we need such a big and complex system if we may only be harnessing a fraction of its full potential? And what are the hidden costs to a system that may initially appear free?	They can act as a single source of truth, organisation-wide database, catering for a large portion of your business needs.	They are complex systems and can require a large organisational shift with extensive training before they are used well. You will require paid-for support if you don't have the skills in-house.	There are charity discounts available but they can be tricky to find and are based on eligibility.
Salesforce NFP				The Salesforce NFP website doesn't give you a huge amount of insight into the details of the offer (it sells you the idea of the product). Looking at Consulting Partner websites can be more useful.
Civi CRM				You'll need to make sure your hired expert is based in the UK to ensure data storage in the EU.

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Product	How it works	Pros	Cons	One thing you should know…
Build your own - (no code/low code)				
Zoho Creator	These are interesting new additions to the charity-database world. They allow you to build your own simple databases using drag and drop techniques (a bit like Survey Monkey). This is referred to as 'no-code' as there's no programming required. You can build a simple database - perhaps most useful for tracking data for individual projects - with no code at all. If you want to add some more complexities or build a larger, organisation-wide database you may need to add some code which you can do yourself if you have the in-house knowledge or the inclination to learn using how-to videos. You can also hire certified experts from their providers lists.	They offer full flexibility to build a bespoke database that suits your unique ways of working and data collection and analysis needs.	There is a learning curve and you will need skills, time and commitment in-house to build these yourself. Otherwise you will need to pay for support. You may spend time building something from scratch when something already exists that will fulfil 80% of your needs. Is it worth it?	There are lots of Zoho products (including Zoho CRM which is an out-of-the-box solution). Zoho Creator is the platform where you can build your own. You can integrate with many other Zoho products such as HR, Finance, Fundraising, Membership etc.
Knack				The same drag and drop interface with example templates as Zoho Creator. But knack isn't part of a larger suite of products.
Airtable				Offers a less user friendly interface than Knack and Zoho (more like the look of a spreadsheet rather than the look of a form). It's a newer product so functionality is still being developed.

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Product	How it works	Pros	Cons	One thing you should know…
Off the shelf All rounder – Customise & configure				
Simply Connect	These are well-known databases built specifically for the charity sector. These systems all have case management at their core but also provide other modules such as donor, member and volunteer management. With all of these systems, you will pay to use the software and that normally includes a package of support directly from the company themselves. The support usually involves implementation, migration of your current data, training and end-of-the-phone support once you're underway. Costs for the software varies between companies often based on how many users you have, how much data you store and, in some cases, how much your organisation's annual income is. There are pros and cons to each of these systems: some offer a one month free trial, some don't work well on mobiles, some allow integration of other online tools, some are more customisable than others. This is why you need to know what your top priorities are before contacting the company.	These companies have a great understanding of the charity sector and you will feel well understood when describing your needs. There is no middle man when seeking support – you are dealing directly with the company.	Some of the user interfaces are dated and, as such, use on mobile devices can be limited. There is a greater upfront cost to these systems but we don't see that as a negative. Be wary of free options – implementing a system is a big job and unless you are systems change wizards you're likely to need some help.	Originally developed by a CVS in Sheffield, and with Social Prescribing and Volunteer Matching modules. Well suited to infrastructure organisations.
Lamplight				An affordable module-based pricing system which doesn't step up cost according to users or records makes it a scalable solution. Implementation packages range from £0 'do it yourself' to a full implementation.
Charity Log				The user interface is quite dated but this is a conscious decision by the company based on user feedback about apprehension to change. Offer a 1 month free trial.
Better Impact				They've got an excellent and transparent pricing tool for you to get a detailed quote based on your needs. Offer a 1 month free trial.

Database comparisons (work in progress December 2020)

Product	How it works	Pros	Cons	One thing you should know…
Off the shelf Impact focussed - Customise & configure				
Upshot	These systems are the same as above but with a much tighter focus on service user impact. We've included them here because we think they are useful to consider as a simple case management system for people who aren't looking for anything wider than that. As with the 'all-rounders', you purchase the software and receive support directly from the company.	The tight focus of these systems mean they can be quicker to implement and easier to learn to use.	You may need a larger system down the line so consider how future-proofed your decision is.	Offers both a funder and deliverer module it to tie the two together. A mapping tool allows you to map participants and overlay ONS data to contextualise service delivery.
Views				The company's focus for 2021 is to upscale their built-in intelligence tools. No inbuilt workflows means easy to implement but can't put in rules to guide how and when data is entered.
Impact Tracker				You can have a quick look at the product and how it works using their Vimeo channel before booking a demo.
Time to Spare				It's free. The user interface is extremely modern and well suited for mobile devices.
TP Tracker				It was originally built for housing associations to manage tenant participation but has since adapted to make a broader offering to charities.

Product	How it works	Pros	Cons	One thing you should know…
Bolt on Impact tools				
Outcome Stars	We've included these impact focussed tools, as they may be relevant in people's search for systems to capture the outcomes of their work. Both of these systems offer tools to track progress of service users over time. They don't offer a complete CRM solution but if you already have a CRM and are looking for impact tools to integrate or complement that, these could be worth exploring.	These are simple and well-evidenced tools to use to measure distance travelled outcomes.	They are not designed to act as a CRM solution.	Integrates with Charity Log
Impactasaurus				It's free. Does not collect any service user information -uses a unique ID number only.
Makerble				There is a lot of functionality which means there's a learning curve but also a lot of potential. Very modern user interface.