

CASE STUDY

RAPID RESOLUTION OF SCREENING ALERT BACKLOG FOR LARGE UK INVESTMENT PLATFORM

MANAGED SERVICES

**Critical backlog of
20,000+ sanctions
screening cases cleared
in under three weeks,
minimising regulatory risk
exposure and enhancing
operational stability.**

The Challenge

Navigating Unexpected Alert Volumes & Regulatory Pressure

The client, a major player in the UK investment sector, faced a critical operational challenge after implementing a new sanctions screening tool. Designed to enhance their compliance framework, this system unexpectedly triggered a significant surge in alerts, resulting in a backlog of over 20,000 individual cases (some of which had up to 90 individual hits) that required urgent review, analysis, and resolution.

The firm was under intense pressure to meet a tight deadline amid potential regulatory scrutiny. Their internal teams, already managing ongoing business-as-usual (BAU) responsibilities, did not have the capacity to handle this sudden and large-scale influx of cases, which increased the risk of non-compliance if not addressed swiftly and effectively.

The client needed resources with deep expertise in financial crime compliance and alert handling to accurately clear the backlog and support the re-testing of their new screening tool.

The Solution

Thistle Initiatives' Agile Managed Services & Expert Deployment

Understanding the urgency and the critical nature of the situation, Thistle Initiatives responded with the speed and precision that underpins our Managed Services solution. Leveraging our readily available pool of experts, Thistle deployed a team of 15 highly experienced financial crime professionals within just one business day.

Our approach was comprehensive and focused on the client's needs:

- **Rapid Mobilisation & Specialised Expertise:** The team we deployed consisted of experienced analysts and investigators with specific expertise in customer screening, sanctions, Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs) reviews, and AML alert remediation. This specialist knowledge was crucial for efficiently navigating the complexities of the backlog.

- Efficient Onboarding & Immediate Impact:** Leveraging our extensive experience with diverse financial institutions and compliance systems, our team participated in an intensive, client-focused training session that lasted just one day. This allowed them to quickly grasp the client's unique operational workflows, risk appetite, and the intricacies of the new screening tool, enabling them to begin productive work on the alerts almost immediately.
- Dedicated Expert Leadership & Stakeholder Management:** Thistle provided a senior team leader who served as the central point of contact. This Senior Manager seamlessly integrated with the client's key stakeholders, ensuring transparent communication, providing accurate daily progress reports, and managing the workflow of the Thistle team. This approach aligns with our commitment to providing not just resources, but exceptional outcomes and expert oversight.
- Unwavering Commitment to Delivery:** Demonstrating a true partnership approach, the Thistle team worked diligently, including overtime and weekends, to expedite the review process. Crucially, this exceptional effort was provided at no additional cost to the client, highlighting our focus on achieving the client's objectives within the agreed timeline. This flexibility is a hallmark of our Managed Services offering, designed to help firms during peak workloads and remediate operational backlogs efficiently.
- Collaborative Root Cause Analysis:** Beyond the immediate task of clearing the backlog, the Thistle team collaborated closely with the client's core compliance and IT departments. This proactive engagement helped to identify and understand the underlying reasons for the surge in alerts, providing valuable insights for the subsequent re-testing and calibration of the new screening tool.
- Timely Backlog Clearance:** The entire backlog of 20,000+ screening cases was successfully reviewed, investigated, and cleared in less than three weeks. This rapid turnaround was vital in alleviating regulatory pressure and restoring operational order.
- Mitigation of Regulatory Risk:** By swiftly and thoroughly addressing the backlog, Thistle helped the client demonstrate to regulators their commitment to compliance and their ability to manage operational challenges effectively.
- Enhanced Client Communication:** The efficient resolution of the backlog enabled the Firm to manage communications with their own clients confidently.
- Sustainable Operational Improvement:** The collaborative effort to identify root causes contributed to the effective fine-tuning of the new screening tool, reducing the likelihood of similar issues reoccurring.
- Flexible Ongoing Support for BAU Operations:** The success and positive impact of the engagement led the client to retain two of Thistle's experienced resources on a full-time basis. These professionals are now fully integrated with the client's core team, providing ongoing support for managing BAU alert volumes. This seamless resource augmentation ensures that daily operations run smoothly and prevents future backlogs, showcasing Thistle's flexible resourcing capabilities.

The Result

Backlog Eradicated, Regulatory Confidence Bolstered, Long-Term Stability Enhanced

Thistle Initiatives' Managed Services intervention delivered significant and measurable results, directly addressing the client's critical needs:

Thistle Initiatives delivers rapid, expert-led Managed Services solution that addresses complex financial crime compliance challenges. We are dedicated to providing "compliance without the complexity," offering scalable, hands-on support that allows firms to not only resolve immediate issues but also to build more resilient and efficient operations for the future. We act as an extension of your team, bringing the specialist skills and resources you need, precisely when you need them.



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