

Executive Corridor
Darlington Memorial Hospital
Hollyhurst Road
Darlington
DL3 6HX
Switchboard Tel: 01325 38 0100
Foundation Trust Office: 01325 74 3625
Corporate Records Office: 01325 74 3700

Request for Information Reference: 06.19.49

Direct line: 01325 743700
Email: cdda-tr.cddftfoi@nhs.net

Email only

24 July 2019

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Request for Information

Thank you for your request for information received on 26 June 2019 in relation to the County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (Trust). We are dealing with your request under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

You requested information regarding automated processes. Specifically you requested information as follows:

I am writing to make an open government request for all the information to which I am entitled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

(NB - In order to better explain the terminology used on these FOI questions, IA/ RPA refers to a style of automation where computer software mimics a human's interaction with application software in completing rules based tasks and processes. It is considered to provide a highly scalable virtual workforce that completes the repetitive tasks humans normally undertake. The general consensus is that this releases human employees from tedious tasks to instead focus on deeper cognitive thinking, investigative analysis and decision making. At a time of reduced workforce capacity, we are interested in the views of NHS organisations as regards employing a digital workforce using IA/ RPA to free up precious staff time)

1. Does your organization presently use and/or endorse a RPA/IA (description of this detailed above) to automate manual, rule-based processes?

Answer: Yes.

If the answer is NO –

1.1 Is RPA/IA something that the organisation would consider (within the next 2 years) as a way of supporting reduced human resource capacity & to improve repeatable business outcomes?

1.2 If the organisation is not considering RPA technology – is there a reason why this is not being considered?

- **Perceived expense**
- **Concerns about how existing administrative staff would accept this**
- **This is the first time we have heard about RPA/ IA**
- **Other reason (please feel free to comment)**

1.3 If the answer is YES – RPA/IA is currently being used in the organisation - could you please detail –

1.3.1 The system type/name/supplier

Answer: RPA – BluePrism

1.3.2 What it is used for (or has been used for) and by what department, examples below

- **Outpatient Services**
- **Data Migration:** When Required but not routinely
- **Improving Referral to Treatment (RTT) processes**
- **Onboarding / Off-Boarding staff:** Yes
- **Back office / Finance related process automations**
- **Other (please comment):** Automation of some transactional processes where interfacing is not available between systems

1.3.3 How did the existing human workforce react to tasks being replaced by automation?

- **Good, they welcome the changes:** N/A
- **Bad, they felt threatened:** N/A
- **Indifferent:** N/A
- **Not sure – no feedback:** N/A
- **Other – please comment – Has only been used to automate:** New processes where there would have been a requirement for additional resource

1.3.4 When did your RPA/ IA system come into use and when does the contract expire?

Answer: 2016-2025

1.3.5 How much does this new technology cost the organisation & if applicable, how many robots are employed?

Answer: N/A.

1.3.6 Has there been any analysis of the system, (&/or case studies) to demonstrate any benefits so far- either operationally, financially or as regards patient safety/management?

Answer: No.

2. Who is the main person(s)/ decision maker (s) or team – who would probably be responsible (or is responsible) for the decision to use RPA/IA in your organization? - Name/title/ contact details

Answer: David Stafford Head of Systems and Delivery david.stafford@nhs.net

In line with the Information Commissioner's directive on the disclosure of information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 your request will form part of our disclosure log. Therefore, a version of our response which will protect your anonymity will be posted on the County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust website.

If you have any queries or wish to discuss the information supplied, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above telephone number or at the above address.

If you are unhappy with the way your request for information has been handled, you can request a review by writing to:

The Chief Executive
County Durham & Darlington NHS Foundation Trust
Darlington Memorial Hospital
Hollyhurst Road
Darlington
DL3 6HX

If, you remain dissatisfied with the handling of your request or complaint, you have a right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at:

The Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire, SK9 5AF

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Website: www.ico.gov.uk.

There is no charge for making an appeal.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Tyrrell
Freedom of Information Officer