

Freedom of Information Act 2000 - Request Reference FoI/23/477
Robotic Process Automation

1. Does your trust currently use RPA (Robotic Process Automation)

Yes.

2. Which departments within your trust currently use RPA (Robotic Process Automation)

- Medical Biochemistry and Immunology (MBI).
- NHS Wales Shared Service Partnership (NWSSP) Accounts Payable – outside of Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (the UHB).
- Haematology – Full Blood Count testing only.

3. Who supplies your licensing for Robotic Process Automation

- The equipment is supplied by Abbott Diagnostics for MBI.
- NWSSP uses Blueprism.
- The equipment is supplied by Horiba Medical UK for Haematology.

4. How many bots have you purchased and over what period?

The equipment is part of a managed service contract (MSC) and not purchased – the equipment was first installed in 2010 and replaced/refreshed in 2018 for MBI and Haematology.

5. Who provides the professional development? is this in house or an external provider and if so, who?

- Abbott Diagnostics for MBI.
- Horiba Medical for Haematology.
- In-house for NWSSP with the RPA Team.

6. What is your total yearly budget spend on RPA in FYE 21/22

After considering your request, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (the UHB) considers this information to be exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Section 43) Commercial Interests. This section of the Act sets out an exemption from the right to know if:

- the information requested is a trade secret, or
- release of the information is likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any person. (A person may be an individual, a company, the public authority itself or any other legal entity).

This exemption was considered by the UHB when deciding whether to disclose information because it considered that in doing so there could be a significant risk in prejudicing the commercial interests of both

the supplier and the UHB. As this is a qualified exemption, the UHB is required to complete a public interest test in deciding whether it is in the public's interest to withhold or disclose the information.

In favour of disclosure: There is a public interest in transparency and in the accountability of spending of public funds. Furthermore, it is in the public's interest that public funds be used effectively and that public sector bodies obtain the best value for money when contracting for the provision of services.

Against disclosure: It has been established that releasing the information sought under the Freedom of Information Act, to which the UHB is subject, will give an unfair advantage to the supplier's competitors. There is a risk of disclosure prejudicing the commercial interests of the UHB by affecting its bargaining position with suppliers. This in turn could lead to less effective use of public funds in future. The UHB believes that there is wider established public interest in suppliers not being prejudiced merely because they have contracted with a public sector body (as upheld in ICO decision notice FS50473543 ICO v Royal Marsden Hospital Trust).

Decision: The UHB considers that the public interest in withholding the information is greater than the interests in disclosing it and thereby giving unfair commercial advantage to competitors of the supplier to which this information concerns. The UHB believes that disclosure of information in a manner which fails to protect the interests and relationships arising in a commercial context could have the effect of discouraging companies from dealing with the Health Board because of fears that the disclosure of information could damage them commercially. In turn this could then jeopardise the Health Board's ability to compete fairly and pursue its function to bring forward development in the area and obtain value for money. It was therefore decided that it was not in the public's interest to disclose this information.

7. What is your predicted spend on RPA for FYE 22/23

Please see the response to question 6.

8. Which departments have been identified for RPA projects

Not applicable to the response for MBI.

The Haematology department is looking at the feasibility of RPA for the Haemostasis & Thrombosis service (blood coagulation).

9. Is the trust intending to expand the use of RPA

The MSC is up for renewal in 2025 and will include laboratory automation as part of any deal for MBI.

For Haematology, see the relevant response to question 8.

N.B. Further similar information may be available from NWSSP, who can be contacted via shared.services@wales.nhs.uk