



Automating the pensions error handling process for NHSBSA using Blue Prism Cloud

How robotic process automation is due to save the NHS Business Services Authority pensions team over 25,000 hours a year

Agilisys

NHS
Business
Services
Authority

At a glance

- The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) completed a detailed discovery within the Pension service to identify where automation could be used.
- The top four error codes were initially identified as first candidates for RPA Automation, with the aim of further automations to follow.
- Error codes generated by data misalignment on different form types submitted by the NHS pensions scheme employers.
- Different form types submitted through various mediums for multiple reasons, creating a complex environment.
- When submitted, forms pass through the NHSBSA data validation system (Compendia) and if any form data fails validation an error code is generated as a result for the pensions team to investigate and clear.
- A number of different error codes are generated due to data misalignment, requiring different investigative and remediation steps.



Challenge

- The NHSBSA pensions team has an annual inflow of approximately 100,000 transactions annually for the top four error codes.
- Error code processing was complex, as almost all included numerous rows of employments and pensions contributions details to review and resolve manually.
- The pensions data management team is under increasing pressure to deliver more services with the same resources.
- Seasonal volume spikes make it difficult to clear the error codes on time.
- A domino effect is seen on other processes as most of the time is being spent on clearing error codes, delaying other important tasks.
- Complex process to automate featuring multiple scenarios and decision points.
- As a result, NHSBSA proactively sought to address the problem through Robotic Process Automation (RPA).



Solution

- NHSBSA selected Agilisys as partner to drive RPA development.
- Blue Prism Cloud RPA was used to automate the top four error codes with the target of automating further error codes at a later stage once the main four codes were operational.
- Focus was on delivering through an agile methodology by breaking down the workflow to create one parent process and multiple child processes.
- Processes were streamlined to make them automation ready and eliminate non-value adding manual steps prior to automation.
- Focus was to clearly segregate the records in the output file into completed, business and system exceptions with clear reasoning next to each record.
- Most logical and optimal configuration for automation was developed.



Impact

- Automatic processing of more than 11,500 error codes was completed in ~643 hours or 58 days.
- Manual processing would have taken in excess of 1,100 hours or 235 business days.
- Reduced turnaround time for administrators, freeing them up to focus on resolving complex activities.
- 100% adherence to SLAs and quality.
- Risk mitigation as accurate pension contribution data reflected on statements.
- Automated reporting with stats on number of completed and excepted items on every input file.
- Availability of a parent process allows further error codes to be automated/included in the future, driving further efficiencies.
- Improved customer experience as statements contain up-to-date and accurate pension contribution information.

Challenge

Complexity and volume causes potential for human error and backlog

Taking action to automate time-consuming error handling to improve the NHS pensions scheme experience.

The NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) is an Arm's Length Body of the Department of Health and Social Care. The organisation manages over £35bn of NHS spend annually delivering a range of national services to NHS organisations, NHS contractors, patients and the public. These services include managing the NHS pension scheme, issuing Global Health Insurance Cards (GHIC), and administering payments to pharmacists and dentists.

By providing these services nationally and at scale, and by digitising and using leading-edge technology, they deliver improved efficiencies and savings for the NHS – and are constantly looking to make service improvements and drive efficiencies.

RPA is an area of automation adopted by NHSBSA to reduce the pressure on resources by automating the time-consuming and repetitive processes invariably required within the sector without changing the existing systems.

NHSBSA completed a detailed discovery within the Pension service to identify where automation could be used, including in addressing the top four error correction processes, which generate approximately 100,000 transactions per year suitable for RPA development. These errors occur in the 1.6 million or more pension updates received from suppliers each year and need manual intervention to correct the records for members of the NHS Pension Scheme.

It is a time-consuming, complex and highly manual process to correct the errors – and automating this process involved multiple challenges:

- Multi-system involvement and validation: MS-Outlook, Macro enabled Excel, Shared drive, pensions processing systems, each with multiple data items, on-screen checks, and conditions to meet
- Numerous sub-process variations in how the steps on each error code should be designed and reported
- Reading through multiple rows of employments and contributions history (sometimes going back 40 years) to find relevant information
- Turning complex manual process steps into solid, consistent automation logic



Methodology

Delivering transformation using an agile methodology

Agilisys and NHSBSA worked together to investigate and develop logical automated workflows to deliver the greatest process accuracy and integrity.

Having been chosen by NHSBSA as its RPA partner, Agilisys in partnership with the NHSBSA team to automate the process for correcting the top four error codes using Blue Prism Cloud. This involved design and development of effective processes for picking up error codes, investigating and resolving them.

To achieve a successful outcome, the business workflow was broken down into its various logical components and each was studied to:

- Create a parent process from which multiple sub-processes can branch out seamlessly therefore laying a platform for adding further error codes
- Understand and maximise the extent of automation on each error code
- Eliminate/streamline non-value add manual steps prior to automation
- Introduce data cleanse activity on the input file to filter out non-workable records early
- Achieve 100% accuracy and timely resolution

Once this process was complete, each component was organised into its most logical configuration for end-to-end automation with minimum non-value adding steps and greatest process accuracy and integrity.

Agilisys worked closely with the NHSBSA team throughout the development of the solution. As each part of the RPA implementation was developed, full user acceptance testing was completed to identify any amendments, extensions and improvements that had to be made before releasing the automation to live.

Impact

On-time resolution and improved customer experience

Successful automation is forecast to deliver annual savings of 25,000 hours per annum for the initial four processes.

Following successful testing, Agilisys rolled out an RPA solution that is built to automatically process transactions that were manually reviewed and processed by staff. This led to:

- Automatic processing of over 11,500 error codes in backlog since November 2020, with a forecast of clearing ~150,000 records each year for the top 4 error codes.
- The potential to save 25,000 hours annually.

In addition to the significant human time saving, other benefits include:

- Freed up time for administrators, allowing them to focus on more complex value adding activities
- 100% adherence to SLAs and quality
- Risk mitigation accurate pension contribution data reflecting on statements
- Increased processing time per day as Blue Prism Cloud can process transactions for 12 hours each day based on application availability
- Automated reporting of completed and excepted items giving a clear view to the stakeholders
- Improved customer experience as benefit statements with up-to-date and accurate pension contributions data are available to scheme members
- Automated reporting with stats on number of completed and excepted items
- Availability of a parent process allows further error codes to be included for automation in future therefore generating more efficiencies

Given the challenge of needing to maintain and grow service delivery with resources that are under immense pressure, saving over 25,000 hours per annum is a welcome achievement. This time saved within the NHSBSA team will be spent improving the service, and on multiple value-adding activities that has made NHSBSA a leader in its field.



Partnership
Integrity
Innovation
Passion

Agilisys

Agilisys, an employee owned organisation, is one of the UK's fastest growing and innovative cloud and digital transformation specialists, enabling organisations to adopt technologies, platforms and processes that promote new ways of working.

An established partner for both the public and private sector for nearly two decades, we have earned a strong reputation and hold deep domain expertise delivering change and innovation, particularly within local and central government.

We support our customers through a network of offices and centres of excellence throughout the UK, employing over 1,500 staff across the UK.

Scale Space, Imperial College
White City Campus,
58 Wood Lane, London,
W12 7RZ

t +44 (0)845 450 1131
e info@agilisys.co.uk
w www.agilisys.co.uk