



# How robotic process automation can transform citizens' trust in public sector organisations.

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# How robotic process automation can transform the trust of citizens in public sector organisations.

**In a country poised to grow by three million people by the end of the decade, the UK's public sector agencies must have the agility and scale to handle the increase. Yet with budgetary constraints, legacy processes and systems, and a weary public, the nation's government organisations face challenges implementing and embracing change.**

The coronavirus pandemic has changed the hearts and minds of the UK public. The status quo of the pre-pandemic era has been rapidly dismantled, giving way to citizens wanting immediacy in their interactions with government agencies.

The challenges become exacerbated with the nation's demographic simultaneously growing and changing shape, as digital natives enter adulthood and bring with them higher digital expectations, driven by their experience in the commercial sector.

The cost for a complete digital transformation to automate all processes, though, is more than most agencies can afford. A more blended approach, where organisations identify candidate processes and perform a benefits assessment

on Robotic process automation (RPA) versus a full digital transformation is a real alternative. Robotic process automation can automate many of the repetitive, routine tasks that humans now perform without the high costs and disruption that result from an IT overhaul.

For those public sector organisations that have implemented RPA, the increased efficiency has produced significant results for lower cost investment – and a more satisfied citizenry. This paper will examine how RPA can benefit the UK's public sector agencies and build on the service delivery to its citizens.

# Introduction.

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**In its 2019 study of the world's largest robotic process automation (RPA) companies, The RPA Services Market Will Grow to Reach \$12 Billion by 2023, market research giant Forrester predicted that the market for such services would rise to \$12 billion by 2023 (1).**

The coronavirus pandemic has only served to highlight the need for more significant investment in technology as the public's desire for increased responsiveness from all organisations, including government, has accelerated.

Driving that growth explosion are several factors, including many companies' push toward digital transformation, a need for increased governance, and a need to streamline processes and cut costs.

These challenges face the public sector even more than they do private enterprises. To improve their reputation and become more agile, government organisations need a way to deliver services more rapidly, as demand grows along with the population.

At the same time, many public sector organisations suffer from reduced budgets and workforce, according to a 2017 Deloitte report, *The New Machinery of Government: Robotic Process Automation in the Public Sector* (2). They often face sudden policy changes when parties change power, creating a need to integrate the new policies into established procedures.



# How Does Robotic Process Automation Work?

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Robotic process automation uses software programmes, called 'robots' (or 'bots') to automate business processes that organisations can reduce to a set of rules or transactions. Instead of using in-house or outsourced teams to carry out these tasks, they can assign bots to handle them.

Unlike a full-scale digital transformation, RPA does not require users to upgrade their legacy IT system, making it the perfect solution for public sector organisations on a strict budget.

By deploying RPA within an organisation, the bots can take on tasks quickly. The teams whose responsibility it once was to perform these tasks can direct their attention to more complex work.

The bots work 24/7 and are less prone to errors than a human team. Cost-effective and efficient, they can free the time of staff to better allocate and focus their expertise and efforts.

## What tasks can be automated?

Robots can perform a broad range of processes, most of which are common to public sector agencies. RPA can automate:

- > **Tasks that involve data processing, such as making calculations, collecting data from forms, digital channels or data migration**
- > **Repetitive processes that are often prone to humans error**
- > **Tasks that need to be performed during off-hours**
- > **Processes that don't involve a judgement call, but instead rely on stated rules to implement**
- > **Processes that can be triggered electronically**

Government services, therefore, stand to benefit greatly should the UK's public sector adopt robotic process automation on a wide scale. Those public-sector services that have already adopted RPA have demonstrated excellent results.

**The opportunity is here. The public sector need only act to put it into motion.**



# The Public Sector's Current Challenges

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Government organisations look for opportunities to continually improve service delivery and associated processes. Adding to the challenge, policies often change with a change in leadership – or a Parliamentary vote.

Robotic process automation can help. Traditionally, public sector agencies have large teams executing high volume and manual processes, such

as reading and validating documents, performing calculations and completing administrative activities.

In recent years, reading and responding to emails, as well as searching for and scraping data, have joined these traditional processes (2). And, most Government offices close at the end of the business day and stay closed over holidays and weekends.



To add to these challenges, the UK's population looks to increase by three million between 2019 and 2029, reaching 70 million people no later than 2031, according to a 2019 Independent article, 'UK Population Set to Rise by 3 Million in Next Decade Due to Net Migration Increases' (3). Without a way to automate some of the services they need, the backlog will undoubtedly grow.

Budget constraints also hamstring many public sector organisations. There is often simply no money available for the kind of full-scale digital transformation that could streamline these processes.

Several UK public sector organisations have met these challenges and more through the benefits realised by deploying RPA solutions.

# Case Studies Indicate RPA's Effectiveness for the Public Sector's Challenges

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## Success with Major UK Police Force

Several case studies of governmental and other organisations demonstrate RPA's capabilities to take over tasks that most public sector agencies face. In the 2017 report, *The New Machinery of Government* (2), it was reported how a major police force in the UK solved some of its most pressing challenges.

**Police officers and their support staff spend a great deal of time filling out forms, passing out traffic tickets, and working on other repetitive processes. These processes take little to no brainpower and drain officers' enthusiasm and motivation.**

The boredom and annoyance officers experience when pushing papers often results in errors. In police work, an error on a critical report could lead to an innocent person being charged for a crime.

Furthermore, the time officers must spend in paperwork takes them away from their core tasks – investigating crimes, tracking down the perpetrators, and serving as witnesses in court as they protect their communities.

An opportunity for this police force was to transform their workplace with the help of robotic process automation.



The suggested solution included automating the process of handling traffic offences, researching and filling out character enquiries, auditing their intelligence systems, updating alcohol licences for pubs and restaurants, and researching patterns of behaviour that could indicate a cybercrime is in progress.

Automating as many tasks as possible frees the officers' hands to get out into the community to build trust. In addition, as criminals become more sophisticated in their tactics, police officers need that time to conduct high-tech investigations.

Furthermore, in a service that deals with matters of life and death, RPA's continuous 24/7 availability can take care of the paperwork and other routine matters while the officers handle critical calls.

RPA's ability to automate tasks can replace some of the support staff police depend on for assistance with paperwork, saving money that the police force can spend on better training and equipment.

## UiPath Paves the Way to Digital Government with RPA

As the United Kingdom's largest Government department, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) was an ideal choice for global software company UiPath to modernise with robotic process automation. Like many public sector organisations, the DWP faced a huge backlog of cases – 30,000 unmet claims – in 2017, according to UiPath in their report, *The Path to Digital Government* (5).



At that time, the new pension claims process depended on manual inputs and calculations. To handle their massive backlog, DWP retained UiPath to implement the RPA portion of their 'Intelligent Automation Garage', an IT department specifically tasked with increasing productivity and improving the decision-making process through automating routine tasks.

Instead of needing to hire a team numbering in the thousands for 'several thousand hours', UiPath created 12 robots to handle the backlog. The company deployed the robots within only 12 weeks from conception, compared to the usual six-to-nine-month duration, even Agile processes take.

Working at a pace of 2,500 cases every week, the robots cleared the entire caseload in two weeks. Since that first deployment, the DWP has created and deployed more than 50 robots, automating more than 20 processes. During peak workloads, DWP can create new robots within three minutes, thanks to the customisable templates that UiPath supplied the Garage. Within ten minutes, the DWP can have 20 robots up and running to handle the extra work.

**According to the DWP's senior product manager, Shaun Williamson, that kind of efficiency has yielded a 15-to-1 return on the department's RPA investment. With the increased productivity automation has brought the department, it can better meet its goal, 'to deliver outstanding service to its claimants and customers'.**



## RPA: An Intelligent Investment in Building Citizen Trust

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According to research by the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, citizen trust in government is eroding at a rate of four per cent over an 11-year period (5).

While private sector businesses provide omnichannel, personalised, and real-time customer experiences, government organisations all too often require in-person appearances, standing in long lines, and filling out paper forms. After that inconvenience comes a long wait for service delivery.

With RPA's capacity to operate 24/7, the wait can shorten considerably. Its ability to collect data, perform calculations, and respond to regulatory changes in real time enables government organisations to respond to requests quickly.

Since RPA can connect data between platforms, it can eliminate the silos that separate departments, doing away with duplicate processes and providing documentation in the process. Its ability to follow rules-based processes eliminates the errors that result from employees performing repetitive routine tasks.

With RPA, therefore, employees can concentrate on serving citizens rather than focusing on the process. Backlogs disappear, resulting in satisfied people and building trust.

RPA is highly scalable, enabling even large organisations to streamline processes and deliver services rapidly. As workloads increase with population growth, this ability will become even more critical for government agencies.

Finally, with more automation, public sector organisations can empower their employees to tackle more complex tasks. Resulting in a talented, engaged workforce, attracted by the opportunity to maximise their strengths, will meet -- and exceed -- citizens' expectations.

parties change power, creating a need to integrate the new policies into established procedures.





# Conclusion.

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Solving the problem of disconnected, siloed departments and processes is critical to creating service delivery improvements that will augment the UK public's trust in its government organisations. Robotic process automation's ability to connect systems and processes can reduce duplication, enhance efficiency, and provide better documentation at each step (4).

RPA's capacity for connecting legacy systems without a costly IT overhaul saves money, optimising processes without major investment. Furthermore, it can work at scale, a major advantage as the nation's population continues to grow.

As regulations evolve, RPA can automate those changes across platforms, enhancing compliance at every step. Employees whose jobs once required hours of administrative tasks will find themselves empowered to do the work they trained for, making it more likely for government agencies to attract the finest talent in their fields.

Finally, 21st-century citizens demand 21st-century efficiency and speed from government agencies. RPA's capacity for 24/7 service, its error-free operation, and real-time solutions make it the ideal way for the UK's public sector organisations to rebuild the trust of the people they serve.

## About Shout.

Shout are a software consultancy headquartered in the UK, with offices in Newcastle, London and Philadelphia. Led by founder and CEO Gary Boon, author of this paper, Shout design, architect and engineer software solutions for clients across finance, property, sport and leisure sectors, and for UK government.

Digital partners to the UK ICO and Hitachi Capital, Shout provide Cloud Strategy, Application Development, Data Analysis and UX Design Services to a host of public and private sector organisations.

# Additional Resources.

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