



Information Governance Team

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Dear Sir/Madam

Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)

Request ID: FOI758558864

Thank you for your request for information relating to Automation of social security benefits.

You have requested the following information:

I seek information concerning the automation of the system and process for the provision of social security benefits - including, but not limited to, the application process, eligibility assessments and determinations, dispensing of benefits, and complaints and appeals.

CLARIFICATION: As the council is only involved in Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support and Free School Meals, please proceed with these three social services.

We hereby request access to the following information:

1. What processes (i.e., applications for benefits, eligibility assessments, dispensing of benefits, monitoring benefits, and/or filing complaints and appeals) associated with delivering social security benefits involve third party companies, including the use of software provided by a third party? If so, please provide us with:

1.1 The name of the third-party;

MRI (previously Capita) Academy system and NEC Enterprise system.

1.2 Details about the goods or services they provide and which part of the process for the provision of social security benefits they are involved in (e.g application, eligibility assessments, monitoring, dispensing or complaints and appeals);

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support and Free School Meals are processed and paid through

the MRI (previously Capita) Academy system. The NEC Enterprise system is a document management system and is used for file storage, work distribution and claim monitoring.

1.3 The contract that exists between the council and the third-party. We are aware that some of these contracts may be published online. However, due to the large quantity of procurement data, and the limited search functionality, we have struggled to find the information we require. We therefore request that, in exercising your duty to provide advice and assistance in compliance with section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, you kindly provide us with copies of the contracts or links to their online publication.

See: <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/contractsregister>

2. Please confirm whether individuals are made aware when a third-party company is handling personal data associated with their social security benefit?

Yes – included in the Benefits privacy notice on the website Benefits Privacy notice – Coventry City Council

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/benefits-1/benefits-privacy-notice>

3. If third party companies are involved in the provision of social security benefits, how does the council vet, select, and monitor the behaviour of each company, including how the companies protect data of beneficiaries?

All relevant MRI and NEC staff are vetted to BPSS Level 2a which fulfils DWP requirements. All staff undergo Data Protection training.

3.1 Please provide any internal documents that govern contracting with third party companies.

Not held.

4. Which systems in the process for delivering social security benefits have been automated? I.e the application process, eligibility assessments and determinations, the dispensing of benefits, and/or complaints and appeals.

There is a level of automation between information received from the Department for Works and Pensions and the MRI Academy systems. This is to update income details and claim status information accurately and efficiently in the processing of benefits.

5. Please confirm whether individuals are notified of the presence and/or involvement of an AI, algorithmic or automated tool or system when a decision is made and communicated to them?

The Benefits Privacy statement informs the customer that they can “Ask for human intervention regarding decisions made about you by a computer.”

6. If an AI, algorithmic or automated tool is used to make a decision about an individual relating to the provision of social security benefits, are they provided with an explanation of how that decision was reached?

Yes.

7. Are there any internal documents that govern the implementation or use of any AI, algorithmic or automated tool used in the delivery of social security benefits? If so, please provide the documents.

No.

8. How many complaints have you received that concern errors relating to an automated process, and which part of the process did they relate to (eg application, eligibility, dispensing or complaints and appeals?) For example, if a system has incorrectly assessed someone, or incorrectly flagged something as fraud.

None.

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For information, we publish a variety of information such as: [FOI/EIR Disclosure Log](#), [Publication Scheme](#), [Facts about Coventry](#) and [Open Data](#) that you may find of useful if you are looking for information in the future.

If you are unhappy with the handling of your request, you can ask us to review our response. Requests for reviews should be submitted within 40 days of the date of receipt of our response to your original request – email: infogov@coventry.gov.uk

If you are unhappy with the outcome of our review, you can write to the Information Commissioner, who can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or email icocasework@ico.org.uk.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in your response.

Yours faithfully

Information Governance