

MAY 2017

## **KING'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL NHS FOUNDATION TRUST THE BENEFITS OF ID SCANNING**

### **The organisation**

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust is one of London's largest and busiest teaching hospitals, providing a range of services to the areas of Camberwell including Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham and Bromley.

Nationally and internationally recognised work takes place across a number of sites and specialist fields including liver disease and transplantation, neurosciences, cardiac, blood cancers and foetal medicine.

The trust employs staff from 120 countries with a range of diverse backgrounds. On average there are 150 new starters each month, all of whom need to be consistently checked in line with the NHS Employers employment check standards.

### **Background**

For a number of years the trust has used an ID scanning system for new members of staff. Before using scanning equipment and software, the trust relied on recruitment administrators to visually inspect identity documents such as passports and driving licenses. This process depended on individual experience to detect anything suspicious. The trust deemed this to be very risky, particularly given the sophistication by which fraudulent documents are now made.

As the Home Office continues to tighten up on immigration and organisations face increasingly large fines for employing an illegal worker, in 2015 the trust decided to tighten up its ID-checking procedures and retrospectively check 6,000 staff that were recruited prior to the implementation of the id verification technology in 2009.

### **Preparation**

It took 16 months to prepare for the introduction of the retrospective ID scanning project. Engagement and buy-in from the trust board of directors was key in the early stages.

Before carrying out the checks, the trust sought legal advice and developed a comprehensive communications strategy including a factsheet with FAQs. It was crucial to get this right from the outset to ensure staff fully understood the rationale for the checks, the benefits for the organisation, the process that would follow and when their checks would take place.

“Engagement and buy-in from the trust board was key in the early stages”

## How the scanner works

The main scanner, located in the HR office, uses a variety of light sources to carry out a variety of checks to verify the documents produced are genuine and highlight potential discrepancies. The equipment works on all passports and any other identification document that has a machine readable zone, such as driving licenses and certain ID cards. The trust also has a portable system for use at remote sites.

ID scanning means that administrators no longer have the burden of checking documents. As part of the package, administrators are trained to deal with situations where false documents are suspected and subsequent local investigations need to take place.

If a problem is detected the system automatically stores a copy, allowing the originals to be handed back to the individual. This allows the administrator to flag there is an issue. Nothing is said to the individual at the time of scanning. The administrator can then get in touch with the provider to ask for a full report on the document or refer the matter to the Counter Fraud Team. A response is typically sent within 60 minutes, outlining any discrepancies found within the document.

Countries do change passports periodically, so it is important to handle discrepancies carefully to avoid any unnecessary worry or embarrassment for the individual. In such cases, employers will need to check with UK Visas and Immigration.

As and when fraudulent processes to create false documents improve, the scanner software is updated.


## Costs

There are a number of systems available on the market. Costs generally range between £5,000 and £10,000 for a three year contract for equipment, training and detailed reports when required. This is nominal in comparison to the fines that can be imposed by the Home Office should an employer be found to employ an illegal worker.

## Outcomes/successes

After 12 months, 92 per cent of staff had been successfully checked. The trust has seen a significant decline in the number of individuals presenting false documents, which has significantly reduced the risk of employing an illegal worker. During the 12-month period, around 500 staff voluntarily resigned before having their documents checked. The Trust carried out further checks with the Home Office in relation to this group of staff ensuring that all staff subject to the project were checked. During the 12-month retrospective check period, the trust identified two substantive members of staff working under false documents. One of whom was a matron who had worked in the trust since 1997 and had never had the right to work in the UK.

Financial recovery of over £105,000 was achieved as a result of the project, some through re-claimed pension contributions, which has led to a return on investment



of over 400 per cent. This money has been returned to the Trust to fund core patient services.

The use of the scanner and software has transformed the identity checking element of the recruitment process across the trust and in September 2016 won the Government Counter Fraud Award in the outstanding internal fraud initiative category.

## Key benefits:

- Documents are now checked quickly and consistently.
- The system acts as a deterrent to individuals seeking employment who use false identities.
- It reduces the chance of employing someone illegally and a subsequent Home Office penalty.
- ID scanning helps employers demonstrate compliance with the relevant NHS Employers employment check standards.
- It provides an additional layer of assurance to the Care Quality Commission and UK Visas and Immigration of trust recruitment practices.

## Top tips

- ✓ Work closely with HR
- ✓ Develop a strong business case – for the project to work you need support from the board
- ✓ Develop a strong communications plan – staff need to understand the rationale, benefits and process
- ✓ Promote the use of ID scanning – it's a good deterrent!

## Further information

For more information on the system please contact Terry Smith, Counter Fraud and Corruption Manager [terry.smith1@nhs.net](mailto:terry.smith1@nhs.net)

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