

East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust Launches New Virtual Assistant with IBM Watson to Support Human Resources and Bolster Employee Services

Co-created by IBM Expert Labs and East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust, the new intelligent virtual assistant, known as Enquire, will handle queries from over 6500 staff members

Enquire designed to alleviate HR team's workload while improving support for the Trust's workforce using intelligent natural language processing technology with IBM Watson Assistant



Stevenage, UK, November 28th 2022: East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust is today launching *Enquire*, a new intelligent virtual assistant powered by IBM Watson Assistant on IBM Cloud, to support its human resources team's ability to handle queries from its 6500 staff.

Enquire has been created specifically for East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust to alleviate the administrative workload of Human Resources employees, freeing up their time for more complex, value adding tasks, while providing a 24-7 support service for all staff.

Managing wellbeing and helping staff deal with the extra pressures on the health service is a top priority for the Trust. During the pandemic, the Trust's HR department faced a sharp increase in enquiries, leading the team to seek solutions that leverage technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation to drive efficiencies and improve the response time for employee queries.

Developed by IBM Expert Labs in collaboration with the Trust and over fifteen subject matter experts, *Enquire* runs on IBM Cloud and is powered by IBM Watson Assistant, which uses AI to understand customers in context to provide fast and consistent answers across any application, device or channel. Its intelligent natural language processing technology makes it capable of understanding conversational language, moving beyond information transfer toward executing tasks, and ensuring the response it provides is relevant and accurate.

During pre-launch trials, staff had the opportunity to ask questions relating to management training, policies and regulations, rota and pay, and other general employment topics. *Enquire* has also been designed to

continuously improve its ability to satisfy employee requests. Any unresolved queries will be considered for inclusion in ongoing upgrades, further expanding the scope of employee needs it can accommodate.

Thomas Pounds, chief people officer at East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust, said: “It is really important that our staff have instant access to the information they need at a time that suits them. Enquire has been designed and built to do exactly that.

“It will not only provide 24/7 support to our key frontline staff, but means that our HR department can focus on work that provides greater value for the organisation. We look forward to making further developments to *Enquire* based on the needs of our workforce.”

Kate Robinson, Managing Director, IBM Technology, UK & Ireland said : “The NHS is one of the UK’s most critical institutions and has faced growing pressure in recent years as a result of the pandemic and staff shortages.

“We are proud to have developed this innovative resource in collaboration with East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust to help alleviate pressure on the HR team and enable them to provide an even greater level of support for the hard-working staff of the Trust.

“We look forward to continuing to help NHS organisations across the country to address key challenges and deliver the best care possible by leveraging the power of modern technologies such as AI, automation and hybrid cloud.”

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<https://uk.newsroom.ibm.com/2022-11-28-East-and-North-Hertfordshire-NHS-Trust-Launches-New-Virtual-Assistant-with-IBM-Watson-to-Support-Human-Resources-and-Bolster-Employee-Services>