

Bulk Personal Datasets

BULK PERSONAL DATASETS (BPDs) is the term used to describe a large set of data which holds personal information on a wide range of people; such as the electoral roll or the details of passengers on a plane. Bulk Personal Datasets are used by the intelligence agencies to create profiles of people. BPDs are datasets held by both public and private organisations.

What is a bulk personal dataset?

A **Bulk Personal Dataset** is like a large file containing information on a big group of people. It is safe to say that anyone who is a British citizen will appear on more than one bulk personal dataset simply because we are all registered at birth, given an NHS number and assigned a National Insurance Number at 16.

How are they used?

Bulk Personal Datasets are requested by the intelligence agencies; MI5, MI6 and GCHQ. With a warrant the dataset is collected in full and held in the internal agency systems for 6 months so the data can be analysed or extracted.

The Government have stated that the profiles will be of people who are “subjects of interest”, but they also describe the datasets as including information on people who have died and using them to “eliminate those who are innocent”. Clearly whether you are innocent or guilty your data can be analysed.

Specific and class warrant datasets

Bulk Personal Datasets are defined as two separate types of dataset both of which can be accessed by different type of warrant.

Specific warrant dataset: no specific definition has been given but it would be logical to assume the following would be included:

- Electoral roll
- DVLA database of driving and vehicle licences
- Credit reference agency database
- Land registry
- National insurance numbers
- NHS database
- Banking and credit card data
- Passport database

Class warrant dataset: the Government have offered one definition of class warrant data, namely travel data, for example this could include:

- Passenger name records showing who has been on which flight, when and where.
- Data from ANPR cameras (see our [ANPR factsheet](#))
- Police National Computer
- Oyster card information for those travelling in London
- CCTV footage

Because only one example has been given it is unclear which other datasets relating to individuals movements, actions or interest could be requested. For example, it may include files listing people who have bought tickets for sporting events, concerts, theatre or lists of people with subscriptions to magazines or periodicals. Without more detail from the Government we can only speculate at what the full range of datasets available for access can be.

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Are warrants needed to access the data?

Yes, there will be two types of warrant the intelligence agents can use for access to BPDs. These warrants are defined as:

- Specific warrants for datasets, such as the electoral roll.
- Class warrants for less specific datasets, such as travel information.

Warrants will be signed off by the Home Secretary who will authorise the use of BPDs for up to six months. A Judicial Commissioner will be given the opportunity to review the Secretary of State's decision. If the Judicial Commissioner disagrees with the decision, the Home Secretary can go above them and ask for review by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner who can either approve the warrant or offer further guidance.

What concerns are there?

Any dataset could be accessed: any of us could be on a dataset used for analysis by the intelligence agencies. The draft Bill fails to be clear on which records or datasets will be used. More detail is needed to let innocent members of society know how their personal information could be used by the spy agencies.

Limited auditing and oversight: the Investigatory Powers Commissioner is only responsible for reviewing the collection, storage, use and disclosure of BPDs. They will not be responsible for monitoring how the spies will use the information held on the datasets.

Companies have no say: BPD warrants will order organisations and companies to share their datasets with the intelligence agencies. No-one will be able to query or refuse the request.

Don't forget

- Bulk personal datasets are files of information on all UK citizens.
- Very little detail is provided about what datasets can be requested and used.
- BPDs contain information and details about people not suspected of terrorism or crime.
- The Home Secretary will sign warrants for use, Judicial Commissioners will only have the opportunity to review the decision.

Worried and want to have your say?

The Joint Committee scrutinising the draft Investigatory Powers Bill will be publishing their report on the draft Bill in early 2016. You can [read more](#) about the consultation on their website.

If you have any concerns about the draft Bill you can contact your MP. To find who your MP is click [here](#).