

BPH Data Ltd enhanced postcode datasets v Royal Mail raw PAF® data

We're often asked what we do to PAF® data, and why our full UK Delivery Point level datasets cost more to purchase from us as a licensed Solutions Provider than buying direct from Royal Mail.

Below is an outline comparison of the formats using our own address as an example.

The Royal Mail "Mainfile" product is based on a huge relational database requiring 7 files (or 9 including County name data) to return complete UK addresses;

Data File	Approx Count	Data Element	Example
1. Address File	29,000,000	Postcode - Outcode	GU16
		Postcode - Incode	7HZ
		Address Key	30526421
		Locality Key	026634
		Thoroughfare Key	00000489
		Thoroughfare Descriptor Key	0003
		Dependent Thoroughfare Key	00000000
		Dependent T'fare Descriptor Key	0000
		Building Number	0000
		Building Name Key	00001245
		Sub Building Name Key	00000000
		No. of Households	0001
		Organisation Key	02283373
		Postcode Type	S
		Concatenation Indicator	
		Delivery Point Suffix	4L
Small User Organisation Indicator	Y		
PO Box Number			
2. Locality File	42,000	Locality Key	026634
		Filler (ex Postal County)	
		Filler (ex Postal County Abbrev)	
		Post Town	CAMBERLEY
		Dependent Locality	FRIMLEY
		Double Dependent Locality	
3. Thoroughfares File	215,000	Thoroughfare Key	00000489
		Thoroughfare Name	CEDAR
4. Thoroughfare Descriptors File	210	Thoroughfare Descriptor Key	0003
		Thoroughfare Descriptor	LANE
		Filler (ex Abbreviation)	
(Files 3 & 4 above must be referenced twice if Dependent Thoroughfare keys are present in the Address record)			
5. Building Names File	2,500,000	Building Name Key	00001245
		Building Name	CEDAR HOUSE
6. Sub Building Names File	200,000	Sub Building Name Key	n/a
		Sub Building Name	n/a
7. Organisations File	1,500,000	Organisation Key	02283373
		Postcode Type	S
		Organisation Name	BPH DATA LTD
		Department Name	
		Filler	
Additional RM "Alias" files are required to return County names as these are no longer present in the Locality file;			
8. County Alias Postcode File	1,750,000	Postcode - Outcode	GU16
		Postcode - Incode	7HZ

		Former Postal County Key	0301
		Traditional County Key	0841
		Administrative County Key	0532
9. County Alias Names File	400	County Alias Key	0841
		County Alias Name	SURREY
		County Type	A

Note that all address text elements are held in UPPER CASE and there are some complex conditional formatting rules to apply for some combinations.

We turn all this heavily duplicated raw data in to a fully formatted and efficiently structured set of just 3 tables eg;

1. BPH Postcode Master Table	1,750,000	Postcode ID	20591811
		Postcode	GU16 7HZ
		Street Name 1	Cedar Lane
		Street Name 2	
		Locality 1	Frimley
		Locality 2	
		Post Town	CAMBERLEY
		Administrative Area	Surrey
		Country Code	E
		Postcode Type	S
		Delivery Point Count	16
2. BPH Delivery Point Table	29,000,000	Postcode ID	20591811
		Delivery Point Suffix Code	4L
		Organisation Flag	Y
		Sub Building Name	
		Building Name	Cedar House
		Building No.	
3. BPH Organisations Table	1,500,000	Postcode ID	20591811
		Delivery Point Suffix Code	4L
		Organisation Name	BPH DATA LTD
		Department Name	
		PO Box No.	

Please note our **Postcode Master Table** is effectively a complete stand-alone "Part PAF®" street level dataset as it contains all address elements common to each UK unit postcode. A significant number of our clients take advantage of the reduced Royal Mail PAF® Licence Fees applicable to our Part PAF® datasets.

Part PAF® solutions are not available direct from Royal Mail.

We should point out that we intend no criticism of the structure or content of the Royal Mail raw PAF® data. Indeed, it is extremely effective in doing what it was designed to do as the database driving the UK postal system. However, for most other applications it needs a lot of work - and that's exactly our area of expertise.

Another point to consider when reviewing the benefits of using our datasets is that of ongoing maintenance. Reprocessing complete new versions of raw PAF® from Royal Mail on a regular basis requires a considerable investment in IT resource, as does the option of processing monthly raw "changes" data to update a master version.

The BPH solution is simple - we supply you with a complete refresh of our "plug in" tables at a frequency to suit your applications and budget.

The data format outlined above is just one example of our wide range of UK postcode datasets. Please visit our website for more information.