

# Data Sharing Review

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## Consultation paper on the use and sharing of personal information in the public and private sector

### List of questions for response

We would welcome responses to the following questions set out in this consultation paper. Please follow the question order as set out in the consultation paper, leaving a blank response box for any questions not answered.

Please email your completed form to [contact@datasharingreview.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:contact@datasharingreview.gsi.gov.uk)

Alternatively you can send a hard copy response to:

**Data Sharing Review Secretariat**  
**5.26 Steel House**  
**11 Tothill Street**  
**London**  
**SW1H 9LJ**

Thank you.

### Section 1: Background

Question 1.

Comments: The General Register Office (GRO) for England and Wales. We have responsibility for maintaining civil registration records from 1837 and sharing information from those records within the applicable statutory framework.

- Registration records incorporate information on births, stillbirths, marriages, civil partnerships, deaths, adoptions, gender reassignment.
- In general, information is collected at the time of registration for births, stillbirths, marriages, civil partnerships and deaths, or from receiving court notifications for adoptions and gender reassignment. For most registration events the legal record is a paper record contained in a register. For civil partnerships the legal record is the computer record. Other records are held on computer systems for administrative purposes.
- The information is collected and held to meet the statutory duty placed on the Registrar General (RG) and Registrars. The information is shared through appropriate statutory gateways, usually where a duty is placed on the RG or Registrar to provide information.

**Section 2: Scope of personal information sharing, including benefits, barriers and risks of data sharing and data protection**

Question 2.

Comments: In GROs view responsible data sharing provides a range of benefits:

- Supports joined up government services
- Reduces the burden on an individual to notify many organisations of the same event/change.
- Reduces the opportunity for fraud
- Introduces opportunities for efficiencies

For instance, GRO shares information on deaths with the Department for Work and Pensions. This ensures that benefit payments are amended accordingly and that the bereaved receive appropriate communications from the Department

Question 3.

Comments: There are different risks associated with the type of information and its timeliness. For instance, linking information from an adoption registration is far more sensitive than information from a death registration of someone that died in 1875.

The particular risk can be determined by the type of personal information being considered. The general concerns are that the information is used inappropriately or significantly outside the purpose for which it is obtained. This could include use to support criminal activity or direct marketing.

However, the risks of sharing information do not outweigh the benefits providing the appropriate tests and balances are in place to consider any request and to ensure that the data is supplied securely and used for the purpose for which it is supplied.

Question 4.

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Question 5.

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Question 6.

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Question 7.

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Question 8.

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### **Section 3: The legal framework**

Question 9.

Comments: For civil registration purposes one of the main strengths of the DPA is the S34 provisions. There is a statutory responsibility for registration information to be made available in the form of a certified copy (certificate) on payment of a statutory fee. The Registration Acts specify the circumstances in which registration records can be updated. The S34 provisions provide an exclusion from any general requirement to amend records, such as when a person chooses to change their name. Any change to this provision could have significant consequences for the costs and processes associated with maintaining registration records.

Question 10.

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Question 11.

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Question 12.

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Question 13.

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Question 14.

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Question 15.

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### **Section 4: Consent and transparency**

Question 16.

Comments: The majority of the statutory gateways that allow the sharing of registration information place a statutory duty on the RG or Registrars to supply information. In these circumstances our view is that consent is irrelevant. There is no sharing of registration information that is based on consent.

Registrars do however obtain statistical information by consent from informants who are registering events. This information is non identifiable personal information that is gathered for national statistics purposes only and does not form part of the registration record.

GRO and the registration service are currently involved in the Tell Us Once project which is intending to follow a consent based model.

Question 17.

Comments: There are a number of barriers/issues that would need to be addressed from

a registration perspective are:

- The records are not “owned” by the individual as they are the RGs records;
- Not all people named on registration records need to attend the event, for instance a married mother can register the birth of her child, which will contain information on the father/her husband without him being present. In this instance would the wife be able to consent to the sharing of her husband’s information?
- Registration records only get amended for very specific purposes, the vast majority of which remain unchanged as they are records of events. Maintaining consent for access would significantly change the way GRO manages its records.

More generally, the recording and maintaining of consent creates an additional administrative burden that would require the appropriate funding to put processes in place across government and the private sector.

Question 18.

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Question 19.

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### **Section 5: Technology**

Question 20.

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Question 21.

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Question 22.

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### **Section 6: International comparisons**

Question 23.

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Question 24.

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Question 25.

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Question 26.

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**Section 7: Additional questions**

Question 27.
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Question 28.
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