UK Postcodes

Postcodes were introduced to the United Kingdom by the Royal Mail between 1959 and 1974.
There are approximately 2.6 million postcodes in the UK with around 1.8 million currently in use.

On average each postcode contains about 15 addresses.
Typically a full postcode represents a street, a part of a street or a small village.
However, a number of postcodes are non-geographic with no physical addresses

The format of a UK postcode is always one of the following where L represents a letter, and N a number
- LN NLL
- LLN NLL
- LNN NLL
- LLNN NLL
- LLNL NLL
- LNL NLL

Postcodes are made up of **outward** and **inward** sections separated by a space

Outward   Inward

BS7 8HP

The **outward** part is used by the Post Office to send mail to the correct regional sorting office.
It has 2 parts:
- Area - usually 2 letters (in this case BS for Bristol) with exceptions such as M (Manchester)
- District – area normally followed by a one or 2 digit number e.g. BS7

The **inward** part is used to sort mail into individual delivery rounds from the destination sorting office
This always contains 3 characters comprising:
- Sector – district followed by a single digit number (in this case BS7 8)
- Zone – sector followed by a letter (BS7 8H)
- A final letter to give the full postcode

The inward code never contains the letters C, I, K, M, O, V to reduce possible risk of confusion with other characters when hand-written

NOTE:
Area, District and Sector are all official postcode terminology.
Zone is an extra descriptor used within this application

Special Postcodes
Non – geographic codes are often used for PO boxes and direct marketing.
For example all postcodes in area BX and those beginning with EC50, BS98, SW99
Other examples include:
- Girobank (GIR 0AA)
- DVLA (all codes starting with SA99)
- All letters to Santa Claus (XM4 5HQ) !

Some **British overseas territories** also use UK postcodes. For example:
- Gibraltar   GX11 1AA
- Falkland Islands   FIQQ 1ZZ
- British Antarctic Territory   BIQQ 1ZZ

Further info: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postcodes_in_the_United_Kingdom
                     https://www.mjt.me.uk/posts/falsehoods-programmers-believe-about-addresses/