

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY COMMITTEE

Date: 15 February 2006
Time: 09:30
Venue: Committee Room, National Assembly Building, Cardiff Bay
Title: Census 2011- Paper for the Equality of Opportunity Committee

1. Purpose

To provide the Committee with background to the preparations for the 2011 Census; to understand the committee's key areas of concern; and to seek advice on how the ONS can most effectively and efficiently engage with the National Assembly for Wales, and its committees, to help make the 2011 census in Wales a success.

2. Summary

Plans are well underway for the Office for National Statistics to carry out a census in England and Wales in 2011. These plans : take account of lessons learnt from 2001, including the issues in Wales; envisage more active engagement with Local Authorities in the census operation; and include a more formal role for Wales. Consultation on topics for a planned 2007 census test (which includes Carmarthenshire) has started.

3. Key characteristics of census data

There are three key categories of census data, relating to:

- Population units: people and housing, with key characteristics such as age and sex
- Population structures: households and families
- Population characteristics: e.g. employment and education

These data are provided at both national, and small area levels (from Local Authority level down to census 'Output Areas', each covering around 125 households), with cross tabulation of the various population characteristics to give an immensely rich picture of the UK population.

4. Users needs for census-type information

The first phase of the 2011 census was a wide ranging review of whether there was a continuing need for census-type information. This review included meetings with ODPM, the Home Office, Departments of Health and Transport, Welsh Assembly Government, and Local Government representatives. This information was summarised in '*Census strategic development review : User requirements report*' published in October 2003.

The consultation process established that users required :

- Consistent and accurate data for all geographies traditionally provided by a census, with an accurate assessment of coverage and quality.
- a topic set at least equivalent to that provided by a traditional census, and the inclusion of other topics such as income are strongly desired.
- population estimates that are seen to be equitable (that is, fair to all local authorities and free from local authority influence), more accurate and more timely.
- Multivariate analyses for small geographies and populations.

5. Key uses of census data

Census information is used to benchmark annual mid-year population estimates, and to provide decennial detailed statistics for small geographic areas and small population sub-groups. The July 2003 report '*demographic statistics service for the 21st century*' stated that '...There is a requirement for a local count of the population on a periodic basis – at least every 10 years – that brings with it an accounting accuracy and provides a benchmark for calibrating the regular annual, or the planned quarterly, estimates of population and households.'

The main uses of census data can be classified into four broad categories :

- Resource allocation/targeting investment
- Planning and service delivery
- Evidence based policy formulation or review
- Social or market research

6. Key Lessons from 2001

1.1 Many aspects of the 2001 census were innovative and worked well. However, there were a number of problems that have identified lessons to learn for the 2011 census.

- ONS did not anticipate the impact of devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on the 2001 census, and the demand for a Welsh tick-box following the introduction of a Scottish tick box at the instigation of the Scottish Parliament late on the legislative proceedings. This was too late for corresponding provisions to be made to the legislation covering England and Wales.
- The Registrar General for England and Wales is responsible for the census in England and Wales; and the current legislation made no provision for the National Assembly for Wales to take a formal role in the development of the 2001 Census. By the time the Assembly was established almost all key census decisions had been taken.
- The One-Number Census methodology was largely successful in adjusting for under enumeration problems, but was not designed to cope with the severe pockets of problems encountered in a small number of areas (eg Westminster and Manchester).
- ONS's community liaison programme worked well in engaging participation of minority groups in the census, but should have started earlier. Local Authorities were not seen as partners who could have a role to play in supporting census operations in their area.
- The web dissemination strategy has made access to census results available to a vastly wider range of users. The introduction of Output Areas (typical minimum of 120 households and 400 people) has made much more detailed information available than ever before. However, differences in methods (eg disclosure control) and different dissemination routes between England/Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland caused problems to users interested in comparing results across the UK.
- The address information given to field staff to support enumeration needed to be more up-to-date.
- The introduction of post-back enabled the England and Wales field staff to be reduced from 104k in 1991 to 70k in 2001. However, negotiations with Royal Mail started too late.
- We had enumeration failures in the field but did not know about them because the management information system was inadequate. We did not know centrally about pockets of problems (eg in recruiting sufficient staff).
- Contracting out of processing was more cost-effective than if the same process were done in-house. However, the procurement process started too late.

- There is at least anecdotal evidence that the move to a 'usual residence' enumeration base (without collecting information on visitors) made it easier for people to 'opt-out' of the census, and may have contributed to undercount.

7. Key Innovations

The proposed high-level design for the 2011 census introduces the following innovations, partly to address the problems in 2001 :

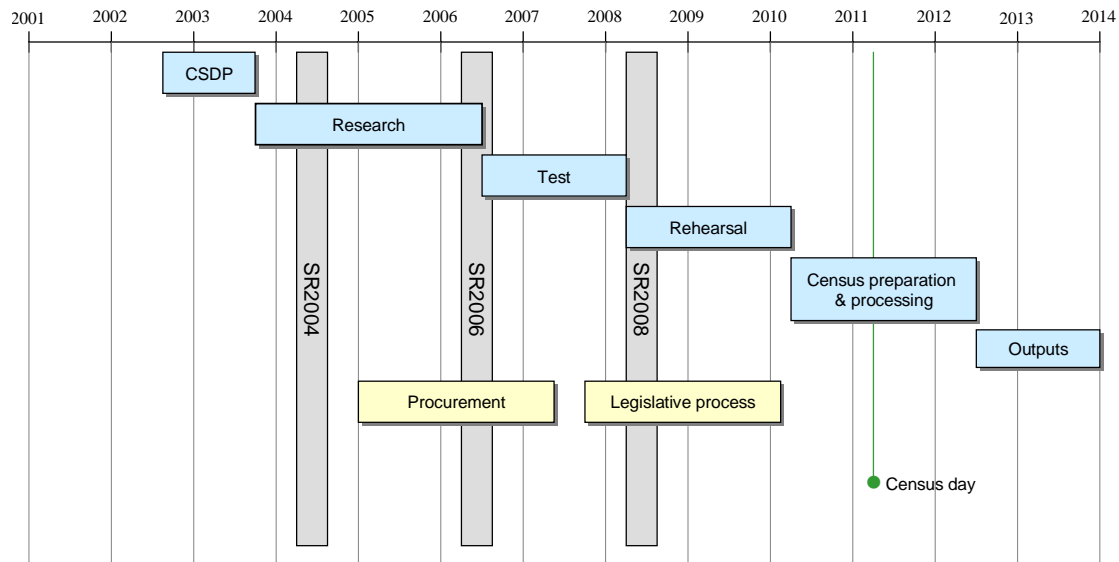
- Post-out of forms
 - Supported by an accurate and up-to-date address register
- Hand-delivery of forms in 'difficult' areas
- Post-back of forms
 - direct to processing centre (as opposed to 2,300 regional centres in 2001)
- Internet response
- Tracking of each form
 - Supported by a robust form tracking system
- More functions for the call centre, acting as hub for queries and issuing of additional forms
- Follow-up in teams, targeted on poor response areas
- Use of technology in the field (laptops or PDAs?) to improve management information and targeting

8. Current Plans

The census programme has the following six main stages :

- Census Strategic Development Programme (evaluate need for a census in 2011)
- Research
- 2007 test (preparation and evaluation)
- 2009 Dress Rehearsal (preparation and evaluation)
- Census (preparation, live running, data processing)
- Outputs production

These are shown in simplified form in the following diagram, along with the previously anticipated 2006 and 2008 spending review dates and the procurement and legislative cross-cutting processes. Some of the dates for stages beyond 2008 are not yet defined (eg how quickly will we start producing outputs) and are subject to further work.



9. Current census topics consultation

An initial census questionnaire is required by August 2006 for the 13 May 2007 test. User consultation on the content of the 2011 Census therefore began in on 16 May, with the launch of a paper - 2011 Census: Initial view on content for England and Wales. This paper set out the likely space constraints under which ONS will be working (eg three pages per person); the demand for additional questions (eg on visitors and collection of information on second homes) and the impact that this was likely to have on the space for existing questions.

The consultation invited responses from all users in support of topics and classifications of interest, using a standard template, until 5th August. There were 7,000 hits to the consultation document webpage in the first two months of consultation. The consultation document was supported by a series of six roadshows (attended by over 300 people in total, including local and central government users) across England and Wales.

ONS received over 2,000 responses from around 500 different users. These responses have come from Central and Local Government, charities, special interest groups and members of the public. Cases were made for additional topics including income; languages spoken; and expanded religion, ethnicity and national identity information. City centre Local Authorities are keen to have questions on regular second addresses (eg people who live in the city during the week and elsewhere during the weekend). There is support for a question on sexual orientation to support equality monitoring and service provision. There is also strong demand for several groups to be able to identify themselves through any ethnic group/national identity questions in 2011. Numerous responses have been received asking for the opportunity to be identified as Welsh, Cornish or Kashmiri. These requests have been supported by organised campaigns for the inclusion of Welsh and Cornish 'tick boxes', providing a standard response to be sent in by members of the public, and these account for well over 100 of the responses received.

The level of response to the census consultation was about three times higher than anticipated, which demonstrates the value of the census to a wide range of users. However, it has consequently taken longer to analyse the responses than expected and ONS has had to delay publication of our response to the consultation from December 2005 to March 2006. The ONS response to the census consultation will be supported by release (on the web) of all the individual responses, plus summaries of the user need by topic (eg income, ethnicity & national

identity; labour market; language etc). The consultation response will provide an update on the initial view on content for England and Wales, having taken account of the response from users, and other considerations (eg operational, legal etc). ONS has worked closely with the Welsh Assembly Government, who will be releasing a summary of the consultation responses from Wales. It is clear that, even with a three-page per person questionnaire, there will be difficult trade-offs to be made between the length of the census questionnaire, the burden on respondents, costs, and the demands from users for additional information from the census.

Welsh National Identity

In the May 2005 topics consultation document, ONS categorised ethnicity and national identity as a topic which "is to be included in the 2011 Census". Such topics demonstrate a clear case for inclusion in the Census, and for which ONS are confident that high quality information can be collected. The consultation has confirmed the demand for a question on Welsh national identity in Wales; ONS will be formally responding to the consultation in early March. Following evaluation of the 2007 census test, further work on developing and testing suitable questions will be undertaken and, after consultations with the NAW, the final decision on the topics (and response categories) for the Census in England and Wales is expected to be taken in the Draft Census Order (currently planned for late 2009).

The ONS guidance on "Ethnic group statistics a guide for collection and classification of ethnicity data", published in 2003, developed separate ethnicity and national identity questions, which have been adopted by the Labour Force Survey (LFS), for instance. These put English as the first response category in England; Welsh as the first response category in Wales, etc). Question options currently being considered for the census include incorporation of national identity responses within an ethnicity question, or a separate question on national identity, along the lines of that already incorporate in the LFS. A separate census national identity question is currently being tested by ONS.

Welsh Language

The Welsh Language Board responded to the census topic consultation, making the case for the Welsh language question to remain unchanged (to facilitate comparison of changes over time). There have been cases made for a general language use/proficiency question in England and Wales (to include minority languages and British Sign Language, among others). Were such a question to be asked, it may interact with a Welsh Language question. There have also been requests for a Welsh Language question to be asked in England.

The census director met with the Welsh Language Board and the Welsh Language policy unit in the Welsh Assembly Government during January 2006. We discussed their views on topics, and also ways that ONS can benefit from the experience/contacts of the WLB and Welsh policy unit on issues such as publicity and recruitment of Welsh speakers for the census enumeration.

10. Main features of the Census in Wales

A number of arrangements were made for the 2001 Census that were particular to Wales. These included:

- offering the choice of Welsh language census forms;
- bilingual publicity material;
- the inclusion of a Welsh language question;
- the appointment of a Welsh speaking Census Manager for Wales;
- the recruitment of bilingual field staff;

- consultation with Welsh census users, the Welsh Language Board and liaison with the Welsh Assembly Government;
- publicity to encourage people in Wales to record their ethnic identity as Welsh if they wished to do so; and
- the publication of bilingual reports on the results of the Census in Wales to be presented to the National Assembly for Wales.

The additional provisions for the 2001 Census in Wales are set out in an Annex to the current ONS Welsh Language Scheme produced in January 2001. Although it is too early to be specific about what the provisions under the Scheme will be for the 2011 Census, we would expect to at least adhere to the same provisions made for the 2001 Census.

11. More formal role for Wales

Following the 2001 Census and the "Welsh" tick box issue, the Government, in its response to the Treasury Select Committee report into the 2001 Census, stated that preparation for any future Census will include a more formal role for the National Assembly for Wales. The Census Act 1920 allows for Censuses to be taken in England and Wales Act and imposes on the Registrar General the duty to make all the operational arrangements for taking Censuses. It requires two pieces of secondary legislation to be made for each census:

- the **Census Order** (an Order in Council) setting out the date on which the Census shall be taken, who shall make returns, and the particulars to be stated in returns; and
- the **Census Regulations** (made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer) setting out the arrangements for conducting the Census - appointing enumerators, delivering forms and returns, roles and responsibilities of Census enumerators and their managers, and the precise content of the Census form. They cannot be laid before Parliament until the Census Order has been approved by Parliament and "made".

The Census Order

Under existing legislation, Westminster cannot transfer any duties and powers of the Registrar General to take the Census and process the returns; nor can the function of making the Census Order be transferred. However, a proposed Transfer of Functions Order (to be made under the provisions of the Government in Wales Act) would make a statutory provision for the National Assembly for Wales to consider those elements of the Census Order (which is prepared by the Registrar-General) that affect Wales prior to the Order being laid before Parliament. A TFO is, in fact, not necessary to effect this change, but Welsh Assembly Government have asked that it should be included in a TFO so as to make clear the obligation to consult the National Assembly. At the latest, we would expect the Census Order (reflecting the views of the National Assembly) to be made in February 2010.

The Census Regulations

Plans are well developed for transferring to the National Assembly for Wales the powers of the Chancellor to make the Census Regulations, through the proposed Transfer of Functions Order. Subject to ministerial approval, this enabling legislation would be introduced before the end of 2006. ONS would prepare a set of draft Regulations for England. These would be the basis of Regulations for Wales that would be prepared by the Welsh Assembly Government, and which would be considered by the National Assembly once the Census Order has been made.

The White Paper

Following evaluation of the 2007 census test a White Paper will be published setting out the government's plans for the census, and will provide an opportunity for consideration by the Welsh Assembly Government (the exact form that consideration will take in Wales is not yet clear, and will depend on decisions taken following the restructuring of the Assembly proposed in the Government of Wales Bill). After discussion any necessary amendments could be incorporated into a single White Paper covering England and Wales and then presented to Parliament. This is a purely administrative process, and does not require a Transfer of Functions Order. We expect the White Paper to be presented in the autumn of 2008.

Welsh Assembly Government input to census development and new Welsh Advisory Group

The Welsh Assembly Government Statistical Directorate is represented on the major census boards, including the UK Census committee (with Registrar General for England and Wales; Scotland and Northern Ireland), the ONS project board, and UK topic groups.

For the 2001 census there were five Census Advisory Groups, with representatives from England and Wales, which covered the central and local government; academic; business; and health sectors. Following experience from the 2001 census two new advisory groups have been set up : one for Wales and one for special populations. The Census Advisory Group for Wales provides a forum for communication between ONS, the Welsh Assembly Government and the user community in Wales; it is jointly chaired by the ONS census director and the Welsh Assembly Government director of statistics. Membership includes representatives of local authorities, the Welsh Language Board, and representatives of religious, ethnic, disabled and voluntary organisations.

12. 2007 test plans and LA liaison

Local Authority Liaison

It is clear from the 2001 experience that it will be mutually beneficial for Local Authorities and ONS to work in partnership in the conduct of the 2011 Census. For the 2001 census a number of LAs appointed Census Liaison Officers to work with the Census Office; ONS would like to formalise and standardise this relationship across all LAs. ONS would like to benefit from LA knowledge of their local areas and communities to improve the enumeration process; in turn, LAs should benefit from better census results. It is very important that ONS receive buy-in from LAs not only to the topic content but also to the enumeration methodology. An LA Liaison Steering Group which has representatives from the Local Government Association, the Welsh Local Government Data Unit and a number of other Local Authorities, was set up in August 2004 to steer this work.

Areas for partnership working will include:

- Address Register development;
- enumeration procedures;
- targeting of delivery methods and follow-up resources;
- community intelligence;
- publicity; and
- recruitment

2007 Test

The planned 2007 test will take place in five Local Authorities chosen to be representative of urban, rural, coastal etc parts of England and Wales and which, between them will provide experience of student areas, areas with high proportion of elderly people, areas of ethnic minority concentrations etc. Carmarthenshire was chosen as one of the 2007 test areas based on its characteristics. The test will comprise a sample of households within the five test Local Authorities. The main aims of the test are the impact of post-out (rather than hand delivery) and an income question on response rates. In addition to testing the operational innovations being planned for the 2011 census, the 2007 Census Test will provide an opportunity to assess how partnership with Local Authorities can operate; what works in practice; and to identify other areas in which co-operation may be developed.

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