Census Advisory Group (CAG)

McAuley House

Monday, 24th June 2013.

Present:	Mr Robert Beatty	Census - NISRA (Chair)
	Mr Brian Green	Census - NISRA
	Mr Brian French	Census - NISRA
	Dr David Marshall	DMB - NISRA
	Mr John Power	NI Assembly
	Mr Colin McIlheney	PriceWaterhouseCoopers
	Prof. Adele Marshall	Queen's University Belfast
	Mr Darren McKinstry	Equality Commission for NI
	Prof. David Martin (audiolink)	University of Southampton
	Ms Sharon McNicholl	Belfast City Council
	Mrs M Brolly	BY2011 / NILS – DMB - NISRA
	Mrs R McGeown	Demography / NINIS – DMB - NISRA
Secretary:	Mr Uel McMath	Census - NISRA
Apologies:	Mr Richard Ramsey	Ulster Bank
	Mr Stephen Bloomer	NI Council for Voluntary Action
	Dr Dermot O'Reilly	Epidemiology and Public Health (QUB)
	Dr Ian Shuttleworth	Queen's University, Belfast
	Dr Tony Dignan	Economic Research and Evaluation
	Mr Joe Frey	NI Housing Executive
	Mrs Jocelyn McCarley	Electoral Office NI

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr Beatty welcomed members to the meeting, thanked those present for their attendance and recorded apologies for those unable to attend.

Mr Beatty informed members that Nick Rogers had recently retired and consequently had resigned his membership of the Group. Mr Beatty asked the Secretary to record his thanks to Mr Rogers for his contribution to CAG over the past number of years. This was supported by all members present. Mr Beatty agreed to write a note of thanks to Mr Rogers on behalf of the Group.   ***Action: Mr Beatty***

2. Minutes from previous meeting

The minutes from the previous meeting were accepted.

Mr Beatty also confirmed that all actions were closed.

3.   Agenda Discussion items

This agenda discussion items for the meeting followed the structure set out in the following presentation:

CAG Presentation: 24th June 2013

4.   Agenda Item 3: Census 2011 – Project Progress (Slides 4-35)

This item provided CAG members with an update on the various census processes since the last meeting. The topics covered included reviews of the following:

a. *Project Progress –*   (Slides 4-5): 2011 Key Census Milestones progress and update*.*

b. *Publication Review –*   (Slides 6-13): Population and Household Estimates / Key Statistics / Quick Statistics / Detailed Characteristics (Phase 1) and UK Population Estimates (Phases 1 and 2).

c. *Future Releases* -   (Slides 14-23): Release 3 Phases / Release 4 / Special Outputs and further UK releases. Additionally members were provided with an update on the UK Statistics Authority Assessment and the NI Benefits Realisation project.

d. *Census Quality Survey* -   (Slides 24-35): Hugh Kerr updated members on the Census Quality Survey background, methodology and certain findings.

Points arising from this agenda item:

b. Publication Review – Mr Beatty asked members to what extent they were utilising census data from Release 1 and 2 within their respective organisations. Mrs McNicholl confirmed that Belfast City Council was using Key Statistics and Quick Statistics with elected representatives for planning purposes; in particular in the development of Local Development plans. The data was also being used to analyse the make-up of new areas that are due to be come into the Belfast City Council area as a result of Boundary changes. Mr Power informed the Group that Dr Shuttleworth had recently used the data to brief Assembly members on the subject of National Identity.

c. Future Releases – In response to a query from Mr Power as to when the relevant 2011 Census records would be made available to the NI Longitudinal Study, Mr Beatty informed the Group that it was currently anticipated that these records will be provided to the NILS by the end of this year. Mr Power also asked if members could be provided with more information about the *SmartCensus* software that James Nicholson (Durham University) was developing. Mr Beatty asked Mr McMath to provide members with the link to the *SmartCensus* website.   ***Action: Mr McMath***

Dr Martin informed the Group that he had recently visited National Records for Scotland (NRS) to discuss outputs. He intimated that NRS were behind in their publication timetable and indicated that ONS were progressing along a similar timeframe to that of NISRA. Additionally, he confirmed that the specifications for the microdata products will be published during this summer.

d. Census Quality Survey (CQS) – Mr Green introduced the discussion on the Census Quality Survey presentation. He indicated that in real terms Census never really anticipated

achieving 100 per cent agreement rates as, primarily, census outputs are subject to Item Imputation which creates degrees of misalignment. However, he stated he was encouraged with the outcomes given the level of detail in the results. Mr McIlheney asked if there were any bad surprises. Mr Green confirmed that there was not and indicated that the results were very similar to those carried out for the 2007 Census Test.

Mr Beatty explained that there were a number of factors to be considered when looking at agreement rates. He discussed 'fixed' and subjective responses; of which he cited Date of Birth and General Health as respective examples. Additionally, he spoke about the number of categories in certain questions and indicated that responders may have had difficulty remembering which they had selected, particularly in cases where a responder was asked, for a single question, to tick as many categories that they feel appropriate.

Mr McIlheney asked Mr Beatty what he thought was the driving force behind the comparatively low disagreement rates on the Number of Rooms question. In response, Mr Beatty referred to the different ways of the how the information was obtained. He indicated that Census questionnaires were completed directly by responders while the CQS questions were completed by a face to face interview. Additionally, the census question was accompanied by guidance on what to count as a room and what not to count as a room. He opined that responders may not have followed the guidance when completing the census forms. He added that for analysis purposes the CQS responses are treated as being the more accurate of the two.

Prof Marshall asked if the report included any recommendations on how to judge the robustness of the output variables. Mr Green noted that the report merely records agreement levels, but does not make such recommendations.

Prof Marshall asked how the NI agreement rates compared for the rest of the UK. Mr Green stated that he believed the ONS rates were broadly similar to the NI rates. He added that the NRS rates were not yet available. Additionally, he confirmed that the agreement rates achieved for 2011 were similar for those obtained for the previous Census which used the information gathered during the 1997 Census Test.

Mr Power asked had the non-response rates in the CQS any statistical significance. Mr Green confirmed that response rates across the CQS had been good and added there was response rate commentary provided in the report. In response to a further query from Dr Power about the coverage of resident persons covered in the CQS, Mr Beatty stated that the CQS concentrated only on the quality of responses given in the Census, as opposed to the coverage of the population. He added that person non-response (and coverage) was the central element of the Census Coverage Survey, and had not been addressed by the CQS.

Professor Marshall asked if any validation of the imputation methods used during census processing was undertaking using data from the CQS. Mr Green noted that the imputation tools had all been subjected to QA at the development stage and that CQS did not address this point.

Mr Beatty closed the discussion on the item by asking Mr McMath to send members we blink to the CQS reported when it was published.   ***Action: U McMath***

4. **Agenda Item: Demographic Statistics Update (Slides 37 – 41)**

Mrs McGeown provided CAG members with an update on developments in NISRA's Demographics Statistics area focusing on the publication schedule for the Mid Year Estimates and the Population Projections. Mrs McGeown also updated members on certain enhancements to the methodology including revisions to the date of occurrence of the vital events and the calculation of age. With regard to the Population projections Mrs McGeown reviewed certain assumptions that NISRA made in developing the Projections. These included, amongst other things, using a completed family size of two children per female and assuming international and within UK migration is zero. Additionally, she confirmed that the new Projections will be published around October with variants produced later.

Points arising from this agenda item:

a. MYEs – Mr Beatty asked Mrs McGeown if estimates will be published for single year of age at 90+. Mrs McGeown indicated the estimates will include figures, by sex, for the 90+ age band. She explained that a methodology has been developed to produce single year of age for those ages over 90+ and this will be released later and will be accompanied by background support information.

b. Population Projections – Board members broadly welcomed the recommendations for the assumption changes. Mr Power intimated that he had some concerns on the effect obesity may have on the longer term projections. He stated that research is ongoing in this area and obesity may affect life expectancy. In addition he added that there are other factors that may have to be considered such as the expansion of the EU, impact of welfare reforms and the income differential between NI and the rest of the UK. Dr Marshall commented that whilst the new projections will be based on a different set of assumptions than previously, those factors mentioned by Dr Power would have been considered by the relevant expert panels.

Mrs McNicholl asked were there any plans to produce Projections for District Council areas. Mrs McGeown confirmed that the first stage will be to produce NI Projections. Thereafter it is planned to publish sub NI level projection around the Spring of 2014. She indicated that NISRA will consult CAG members on this and encourage members to contribute to the process.

Prof Marshall asked if Male and Female Mortality rates were getting closer. Dr Marshall indicated that this was the case suggesting that male life expectancy at birth is increasing due to various causes for example reduction in smoking and better cancer intervention.

The item closed with Group members expressing support for all the proposed changes to the MYE data collection methodology and the revised assumptions for the production of the Population Projections.

5. **Agenda Item – Beyond 2011: Future population and social statistics (Slides 42 – 72)**

Mrs Brolly provided members with a detailed presentation on the work that has been done in this area to date. She reviewed the Options being considered by NISRA; viz

Option 0: A full on-line Census (for both population and socio-economic data) supplemented by administrative data,

Option 1: Administrative Data to count the population & a short form on-line Census to "prove this" & a large scale household e-survey for socio-economic data,

Option 2a: Administrative Data to count the population and an online census for socio-economic data,

Option 2b: Administrative Data to count the population and a large scale household e-survey for socio-economic data. and

Mrs Brolly also updated members on the Work programme to date, focusing on ways the population and socio economic data may be gathered. In concluding, Mrs Brolly outlined NISRA's initial plans for consultation and briefed members on Beyond 2011 developments in the   other parts of the UK.

6.   Beyond 2011: Future population and social statistics – Group Discussion

Points arising from this agenda item:

Mr Beatty introduced this Agenda item indicating that the discussion should follow 3 main themes:

a. Estimating the population
b. Attribute socio economic data / characteristics of the population
c. Procedures and processes.

Discussion theme a: Estimating the population

Mr Power commented on the work NISRA has done on the population counting indicating that the results showed some interesting geographic patterns. He was concerned that NISRA were measuring accuracy against the Census Estimates which includes data imputed from Health (active patients) and that this may have resulted in a degree of double counting. Mr Green confirmed that the census counts are augmented with the Health (active patients) data to produce the estimates so there is a degree of circularity. Dr Marshall added that if there was no enumeration, greater dependence would be placed on the Health data and data from other sources (such as education and the National Insurance systems).

Prof Marshall asked was the net effect of missing students zero across the province. Mrs Brolly indicated that work was still to be done in this area, particularly where students are attending university outside of NI.

In response to a query from Mrs McNicholl Mrs Brolly confirmed that red areas of the map (Slide 66) indicate areas where active patients are higher that the census estimates. She added that it is known in certain areas there is a degree of Active Patient list inflation and further work is required to understand the impact across all areas. Mrs Brolly concluded that she still believed the published census estimates were still optimal. Mr Green agreed with this stating that, during enumeration, field staff were able to identify all households that should have returned a questionnaire. Thereafter census counts were augmented with active patient health data and imputed data, following the Census coverage Survey analysis, to provide robust unbiased estimates.

Mr Power commented that in his view a traditional census count of some description is still required as he believes you are unable to benchmark estimates without census data. Additionally he indicated that a totally online approach may be inappropriate because of IT 'black holes' due to internet unavailability, social deprivation and low IT usage in certain areas and sectors.

Mr McIlheney agreed that it may be too risky to proceed with solely an Administrative Data source approach.

Prof Marshall asked if there were plans to use data from other sources such as social security agencies. Dr Marshall confirmed that these data sources were under consideration and are included under those reference National Insurance data sources. He added that ONS have done some work in this area having merged Nat Ins (DWP) and Health data. He reported that they have attained results which were not as good as the census but results , that, during inter census years, would be deemed as good as anything else available.

Discussion theme b: Attribute socio economic data / characteristics of the population

Mr Beatty indicated that if there was not a census, the attribute data would be collected through a large survey. Mrs Brolly indicated that any survey would be large scale and comprise an online element with scope for postal or face to face follow-up or indeed, telephone interview.

Mr Power expressed concern about online surveys indicating that this could lead to holes in the data due to social demographic effects. He added that without having the ability to refer to baseline data one is not able to say much about who is being affected.

Mrs Green informed members that the Canadian Census has an online response rate of 45% and were expecting this to increase to 60 – 65% in 2016.

Dr Martin opined that most of the data matching methods used for the population counting are not good for identifying household structures. He confirmed that there is a research challenge here, in that focusing on the Population aspect may leave households and household structure unaddressed. He also indicated that a lot of work has still to be done of identifying what attribute data is available from admin data sources.

Mrs McNicholl asked how will the small area data requirement be addressed. She intimated that this was very relevant to Councils, for example, to develop cohesion policy work and to monitor population flows etc across for planning purposes. Mr McKinstry added that his need data on small population groups for equality monitoring.

Mr Beatty took this opportunity to ask CAG members to respond to the forthcoming Beyond 2011 consultation and delineate their data needs, particularly the requirement for small area data and the associated economic benefit from having such datasets available. Dr Martin indicated that in a lot of cases it is difficult to quantify economic benefits but encouraged members to do this if they can.

Mr Green asked members for their view on the requirement to track change from census to census and how important was this. This led to some general discussion on the continuing need for the census. Prof Marshall stated that from a research view point it is very important to track accurate census data over time. Mr McKinstry stated that, for Equality Commission purposes, it was less about change over time and more about accuracy of the latest figures. Mr Power thought it might be worthwhile taking a straw poll of MLAs to get a feel for their support or otherwise for a future censuses.

In response to a question from Mr McIlheney, Dr Marshall confirmed that NISRA will need to make a decision on 2021 during 2015.

Discussion theme c: Procedures and processes.

Mr Beatty reviewed Beyond 2011 development in the other UK Countries – see slide 71.

Dr Marshall stated that ONS will proceed for the meantime with 2 options. He added that he expects this to be trimmed to one by the end of this year with a decision finalised in 2014, probably after discussions with the UK Statistics Authority.

Mr Power indicated that it would be prudent for NI to feed into the ONS Consultation. Mr McKinstry confirmed that the Equality Commission had already done so.

Dr Marshall asked McMath to issue member web links to the ONS Beyond 2011 Consultation web pages for information. **_Action: Mr McMath_**

11.   **Agenda Item – Any other business**

None.

Mr Beatty thanked members for their attendance. He indicated that future meetings will focus primarily on Beyond 2011 developments as 2011 Census operations are winding down.

The meeting closed the meeting at 12.55pm.

Uel McMath
Secretary

CENSUS ADVISORY GROUP

24 June 2013
McAuley House, Belfast

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