

**Date:** 24 June 2021

**Time:** 10:00am

**Location:** Virtually via Zoom

<b>Present</b>	Dr David Marshall (Chair) Sandy Fitzpatrick Dr Daniel McConville Gillian McCrory Jonny Harvey Richard Elliott Denise Rainey Richard Elliott Cheryl Morrow Dr Ian Shuttleworth Prof David Martin Virginia McVea Tony Dignan Dr Esmond Birnie Colin McIlheney	NISRA, Director of Census and Population Statistics NISRA, Head of Census NISRA Census Office NISRA Census Office NISRA Census Office NISRA Census Office NISRA Census Office NISRA Census Office NISRA Census Office School of Natural and Built Environment, Queen's University University of Southampton NI Electoral Office Economic Research & Evaluation Ulster University PriceWaterhouseCoopers
<b>Secretary</b>	Mark Hunter	NISRA Census Office
<b>Apologies</b>	Siobhan Carey Dr Dermot O'Reilly Jahnet Brown	NISRA Chief Executive and Registrar General Queens' University Northern Ireland Housing Executive

## 1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

Dr Marshall welcomed members and opened the meeting by introducing the attendees from NISRA Census Office. Apologies have been received from Jahnet Brown, Dr Dermot O'Reilly and Siobhan Carey. David passed on Siobhan's message of thanks to members for the help and support given in regard to the Census 2021 in NI.

Apologies were also received from Virginia McVea who had to leave the meeting early and Colin McIlheney who could not attend the early part of the meeting due to other engagements.

**2. Minutes from previous meeting/Action Points**

Dr Marshall explained that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 December 2020 had already been published in draft form given interest from the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), who are the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority. OSR are interested in the work of DSAG to support the 2021 Census and review the published minutes from DSAG meetings. These minutes were agreed without amendment and will now be published as the official minute of the meeting.

Permission was again sought from members to publish papers from the meeting today in advance of the official minute of the meeting, given OSR interest, and this was agreed.

There were no outstanding Action Points from previous meetings.

**3. Northern Ireland 2021 Census – update**

Sandy Fitzpatrick gave a detailed update on the Northern Ireland 2021 Census presenting the main points on screen via a PowerPoint presentation.

**3.1 2021 Census Operation – Update**

Sandy informed the meeting of Key Metrics and Key Suppliers.

Dr Shuttleworth asked if any of the suppliers were based in Northern Ireland. In response, Sandy explained that three local suppliers were used. Total Mobile provided the Fieldwork Management Tool software (for England, Wales and NI), Mitie (for England, Wales and NI) ran the lone worker solution and Genesis (for NI) provided advertising support.

The Paper Services operation was outlined followed by some images from the advertising campaign. As part of this campaign Stormont and Belfast City Hall were lit up in Census purple which provided useful media coverage.

The next part of the presentation informed members in regard to the 2021 Census Address Register. The first version was delivered in October 2021 with amendments delivered in December 2020. The development of the register went well, following a “smart” design where those households with poor broadband coverage and/or containing the elderly were targeted for receipt of a Paper Questionnaire. The number of “Undeliverable as Addressed” were not excessive and demonstrated good quality address strings. Resolution took place

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on a daily basis during live operations to update, deactivate, activate and add new addresses. The accuracy of the address register has been calculated as 97% for Households and 94% for Communal Establishments (CEs) with 99% coverage for Households and CEs.

In response to a query from Virginia McVea asking if this was in accordance with predictions, Dr Marshall responded by saying that overall, Census Office is very pleased with the performance of the Address Register. There was a full review of addresses by staff across Census Office due to the pandemic which took an approach of including an address if in doubt in order to maximise coverage. This investment paid off during live operations.

Sandy went on to outline the Key "Postal" Timeline which commenced on 22 February 2021 with an initial postcard explaining that the Census was coming. The initial contact letter arrived between 1 and 5 March 2021 containing a Unique Access Code (UAC) to allow householders to complete their census online. This was sent to 80% of Householders. The remaining 20% received a Paper Questionnaire. This also contained a UAC in the event of the Householder preferring to complete online. Executive Ministers recorded an online video explaining how Departments used Census data to allocate services.

Other key dates included the online live period from 22 February until 24 May and the live Field operation from 24 March until 9 May. Paper Questionnaires will continue to be receipted until 9 July.

Dr Marshall made the points that it was a recommendation from 2011 to run CEs centrally from Colby House and that significant input was received from the Chief Medical Officer on the timing and nature of Field Operations.

Dr Shuttleworth asked if the non-responding CEs were of one specific type. Denise Rainey replied that this was not the case and they were of different types.

The next steps are underway with the Census Coverage Survey already in the Field, an Outputs Consultation at the end of this year, huge amounts of work still to take place in Data Processing and ongoing work with ONS to build a flexible outputs platform. The first results are due in summer 2022.

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**3.2 Scotland (2022)**

NRS plan a digital first Census with Census day on 22 March 2022.

**3.3 Republic of Ireland (2022)**

CSO are planning to deliver a paper census with Census day being 3 April 2022.

Dr Marshall ended the presentation by describing the challenges faced in delivering NI Census 2021. The pandemic affected everything that was done creating challenges in how to manage warehouses, necessitating testing of Field staff and Advertising that had to be filmed in a Covid-safe way. In addition, there was social unrest whilst staff were in the Field. Brexit created worries that deliveries between GB and NI could be affected. There was also a short online outage for 20 minutes on 4 March. In addition demand was higher than expected which although good news created some challenges.

Dr Shuttleworth remarked that he considered the response rate to be a great achievement and wished to record his thanks to be recorded to all the team.

Professor Martin expressed that this was a job well done and enquired how well the enumeration of students went. Dr Marshall explained that the design was that students would be included at both home and term time addresses. There was engagement with local Universities to get listings of students and term time addresses. Jonny Harvey stated that this ensured that there was a good administrative data contingency. In addition, emails were sent to all students with a video produced to explain how and why they needed to fill the form out. This led to responses from overseas students who would not normally have sent in their forms. Professor Martin remarked that he is of the opinion that it was the right call to take this approach to student enumeration.

Virginia McVea apologised for having to leave the meeting at this point and expressed pleasure for Census Office given all that had to be overcome as a team. Virginia is of the view that it is tremendous for Northern Ireland to have this data and expressed thanks for all the effort over such a lengthy period.

**4. 2021 Census – Outputs**

Dr McConville gave an update on Census Outputs. He began explaining that Outputs Consultation will take place this autumn 2021 which will share information on collection

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progress, outline the outputs strategy and seek user views on the outputs presentation, topics and Geography options.

Dr Shuttleworth asked how it was proposed to undertake the outputs consultation. Dr McConville replied that it will be primarily online as there is no appetite for face to face interaction at the present time. This is envisaged to include an online presentation and an online video. Questions and interaction will be encouraged as the aim is to receive as many responses as possible to make it as representative as possible. Social Media advertising will be used. Dr Shuttleworth replied that the use of social media is a good approach as it gives a better chance of getting responses from groups/people who would not normally take part in exercises such as this.

Dr Shuttleworth went on to enquire as to the “runners and riders” for SDC methods. Dr McConville replied that targeted record swapping on the full outputs dataset will carry on as in 2011. Additionally cell key perturbation methods on the outputs tables will be used for 2021. Some parameters on these methods are still being finalised, but the methods are being tested and made ready for implementation.

Dr McConville moved on to the subject of Geography. An adjustable approach is to be taken if Geography’s change and will hopefully fit everyone. This will be tested in consultation. Dr Marshall made the point that Census Office want to be clear about what we are doing and there is an acceptance that we will not please all of the people all of the time.

The presentation ended with the current Timeline for outputs with a detailed timetable to be published in early 2022. Dr Birnie made the point that the timeline was such that he was relaxed about the order of the release of standard outputs as long as user needs and demands were taken into account.

## **5. 2021 Census Quality Assurance**

Dr Marshall welcomed Colin McIlheney, Eileen Byrne and Ciaran Kerr to the meeting before giving an update on Quality Assurance. He explained that this is managed internally in Northern Ireland but for the first time, external scrutiny may be required. ONS already have a degree of external assurance from Local Authorities and others and NISRA may endeavour to take part in the ONS external exercise in 2021/22. This will take the form of a UK wide panel where assessors look at the Local Authority exercise and demographic

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statistics to assess the credibility of outputs. This will take place when the database is well developed. An invite may go out for 1 or 2 members of DSAG to join this panel.

Both Dr Shuttleworth and Colin McIlheney expressed the view that this was a sensible approach.

*Action: Dr Marshall to write to members of DSAG to obtain views on the proposal for 1 or 2 members joining a UK wide Quality Assurance panel.*

## **6. Population Statistics – Update**

Ciaran Kerr provided an update on Publications since the last update, upcoming publications and new developments.

As part of the discussion Dr Shuttleworth asked where the reasons for Migration came from. Ciaran responded that a migrant's reason for coming to Northern Ireland is derived by using the GP registration data. A reason for entering the UK is recorded such as work, family, education or other and this is used to estimate migration by reason.

The slides used for the presentation will be made available to members and published on the NISRA website.

## **7. AOB**

As there were no further items for discussion, Dr Marshall brought the meeting to a close by thanking members for their time.

Mark Hunter (Secretary)

October 2021

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