



# 2011 Census: Councillor Handbook



The next census for England and Wales takes place on **Sunday 27 March 2011**.

This handbook explains what the census is all about, why it matters and how you can help us spread the word in your council and community.



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# The headline messages

- The census matters to everyone who lives in your area. Census population estimates inform the allocation of resources to policy making and service planning at national and local level
- Census information is strictly confidential: personal information is protected by law
- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) needs the help and support of local councils, using their grassroots knowledge and experience to promote the census to their communities. Local activities to be carried out by census field staff and your council staff will be recorded in a census local partnership plan
- ONS runs the census in England and Wales. Our population estimates are built on quality data and produced to the highest international standards



Census population estimates underpin the planning and funding of public services throughout England and Wales. Central government uses census data to help determine the financial support it will make available for local authorities to plan and fund services. Getting the best possible response rates for the census will make sure these allocations are based on accurate, high quality data.

This handbook explains some of the key challenges ONS faces in making sure census estimates truly represent the make-up of communities and numbers of people within them, and indicates areas where

councillors and local authority staff can give their support.

While the last census achieved an excellent, overall return rate of 94 per cent, some communities recorded lower returns, with a potentially adverse effect on their central government funding.

For 2011, we want to see a similar high overall return, with the objective of removing inconsistencies between local authority areas. At the same time, the census design needs to address changes in social structure, such as an ageing population and a growing internet community.

We have responded by making changes to questionnaire content, distribution and collection arrangements and finding new ways to communicate the value of the census and encourage widespread participation across all population groups. Understanding the needs of local authorities is our focus and developing effective partnership arrangements with them is how we will make sure their communities' needs are properly understood and appropriately reflected in census data.

Your local authority has been asked to designate two officers as census liaison manager and assistant census liaison manager to act as census leads within their council. These individuals will be your key contacts for all 2011 Census matters.

We will be grateful for your help and support for your council's census plans and activities – and in encouraging all people in your area to complete their census questionnaire on Sunday 27 March 2011.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Watson'.

Glen Watson  
ONS Census Director

## Why are we having a census?

Census population estimates are vital in helping to shape the communities in which we live and work. They:

- underpin policy making and council funding allocation from central government
- provide information to help plan and prioritise service delivery
- give a benchmark for estimates of population between censuses
- are unique in providing detailed demographic information about local small area populations

While the 2001 Census succeeded in achieving a 94 per cent return rate overall, with accurate counts for most local areas, return rates in some areas were below 80 per cent. A number of local authorities felt their populations had been under-estimated and that this had affected the amount of public service funding allocated to them by government.

Radical new approaches for the 2011 Census have been designed to address these issues.



# What's changed for 2011?

While the 2001 Census went well overall, there were areas for improvement. Without a centralised system for tracking questionnaires, pockets of low return went undetected and it was clear that new processes were needed to encourage greater participation among all population groups. The task is all the more challenging due to significant demographic change since 2001, for example:

- increasing mobility and migration
- ageing population – 25 per cent more people over 85 by 2011
- complex family structures and living arrangements
- more access-controlled buildings
- falling response rates generally to surveys
- a growing internet community

Changes have been made to census operations to minimise risks to quality and accuracy and achieve a good return overall and across all areas. We have identified areas and groups where we can expect initial return rates to be lower – and target our publicity and field operations to encourage those communities to complete and return their questionnaires on time. Local authorities can help us ensure the 2011 Census is a success.



## Did you know?

The amount of public service funding your council and primary care trust gets from the Government is based on the number and characteristics of the people who live in the area. The census needs to include everyone to help make sure your council receives sufficient funding to provide the services your residents need.

## The link between census estimates and public service funding

More than £100 billion a year is allocated to primary care trusts (PCTs) and local authorities using census-based population data, around £25 billion going to local authorities via the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Similarly in Wales, census statistics are used to distribute around £1.8 billion of the £4.1 billion available to councils in the local government Revenue Support Grant.

The accuracy with which each local authority's allocation is calculated is directly influenced by the accuracy of census estimates. This in turn relies on high return rates for all areas and communities - and rigorous attention to detail and quality.

Census estimates are put through a robust quality assurance process, using local, regional and national administrative data sources. These data sets come in all shapes and sizes. This means we can slice our population estimates at any point and drill down

through them. We can examine and address potential inconsistencies picked up by the quality assurance process, such as a small number of young adults identified in an area which has a large amount of student accommodation.

Since the quality of census results depends crucially on return rates, it is vital for local authorities to actively engage with their communities to encourage people to take part and make sure they are included.



## What are we doing to boost the return rate?

- A newly developed national address register will support questionnaire delivery, completion, tracking and follow-up for all households in England and Wales. This is the hub that will drive everything. Its accuracy will directly influence our success because it underpins all census operations
- Post-out/post-back questionnaires, with questionnaire tracking, will make sure the census reaches as many people as possible, and tell us which addresses we need our field teams to follow up
- A flexible field team will carry out intensive follow-up activity targeted at areas where high numbers of households have not returned their questionnaires
- An online questionnaire and help centre, and a telephone helpline providing advice and guidance in many languages, will help make the census accessible to the vast majority of the population
- New online channels will support engagement with the public, media, local authorities, community groups, and students and young people, with dedicated extranet support for field teams
- Our partnership with local councils will be a critical success factor in improving public awareness and address register accuracy, and to inform and support our field operations



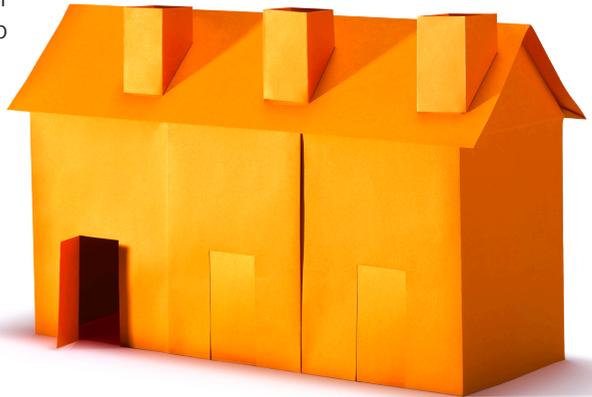
## Working with local councils

Within each local council, census liaison managers and assistants, nominated by chief executives, will support the census and will be the single point of contact for local 2011 Census planning and activity. At senior level the census liaison managers will be discussing, planning and coordinating census activities, helping to build awareness and encourage support throughout the authority as a whole. We have also created a network of census regional champions to act as census ambassadors. These are senior local authority officers representing the 10 geographical regions of England and Wales<sup>1</sup>.

Our partnership with local councils is designed to achieve a consistent return rate across all council areas and for all population groups. This will help

us to produce high quality, accurate estimates and reliable demographic information.

As well as carrying out a national publicity campaign to promote the census to the population at large, we are making a special effort and tailoring our message to build relationships with those sectors of the population who are reluctant or find it difficult to take part. We need to be able to tap local knowledge and understanding in order to deal sensitively with the issues faced by these groups. This is why we are asking local councils and community organisations to work with us to promote, explain and support the 2011 Census.



### Census day is Sunday 27 March 2011

Please remind anyone you come into contact with at meetings and out and about in the community to complete their census questionnaire on or as soon after that date.

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding to the government office regions of Northwest England, Northeast England, West Midlands, East Midlands, Wales, East of England, Southwest England, Southeast England, London, and Yorkshire and The Humber.

## How can councillors help?

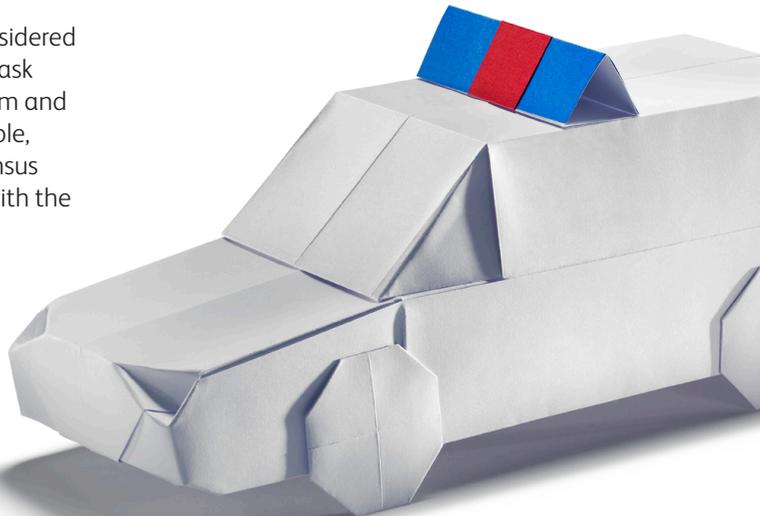
The involvement and support of councillors and council executives will be vital to ensure a successful census in each local area. Here are some suggestions for you to consider:

- Are you being regularly briefed on census progress in your area? Is there routine engagement to keep you up to date with local plans and activities? You may wish to be kept up to date with progress against your census local partnership plan from September 2010
- Has your council appointed a census liaison manager and assistant census liaison manager? Do you know who they are and have you met them?
- Has your council considered setting up a census task group? In Birmingham and Lewisham, for example, strategic users of census results are working with the local authority to help boost return rates

- What can you do as a community leader to build local awareness of and support for the census?

- Does your council have a census page on its intranet and website? A template can be downloaded at [www.census.gov.uk/la](http://www.census.gov.uk/la)

- Could your councillors act as ward champions to support an accurate census in your council area? One council has asked its ward champions to provide feedback to help build the address register, noting, for example, where houses have been converted into flats



# How can local councils support the census?

## 1. Developing the address register

The development of an accurate national, household address register is central to the success of the 2011 Census. Questionnaires will be mailed to households in England and Wales using this register, which will also support the questionnaire tracking system, help target field follow-up resources and provide a key source for quality assuring census estimates. Local knowledge is essential in helping us to identify omissions, duplicates and other address anomalies that could impact the accuracy of our post-out operation and we are already working directly with your council on this project.

Your council team has important practical knowledge of the community which can help us resolve any address discrepancies we find, support us in our field checks and help build an accurate list of communal establishments, such as care homes, hospitals, boarding schools, university halls of residence and military bases.

## 2. Building community profiles to assist enumeration

We aim to encourage people to respond to the census through a better understanding of local communities. We are already working with local councils to identify local groups which call for different approaches to enumeration, community engagement

and publicity. These include non-English speakers, faith groups, very elderly or infirm people, traveller, Gypsy and Roma/Romani groups, short-term migrant workers, asylum seekers, and homeless/rough sleepers.

Your assistant census liaison manager will play a key role in helping our area manager to build a profile of your community that will make sure our publicity, community liaison work and field operations reach local people.

## 3. Promoting the census in your area

For 2011, we are using a mix of advertising, public and media relations to highlight the importance of the census, and explain why and how people should take part, with targeted communication activities for specific population groups.

Your assistant census liaison manager will be working with your council's communication team to help us to spread the word in your neighbourhoods and community groups, paying particular attention to young people and students, ethnic minority communities, older people and people who are unemployed.

## 4. Developing community liaison contacts

We would like to build on the relationships your council already has with your community and voluntary

groups. By working together, we will be able to target and tailor our community liaison more effectively and publicise key census messages.

Your assistant census liaison manager can help our area manager in identifying contacts, forums and other channels for reaching local people and strategic partners who fall within our target population groups.

## 5. Identifying candidates for local field staff recruitment

We will employ around 35,000 temporary census field staff in England and Wales, including area managers, community advisers and other field staff.

Recruitment information is being provided for your council to publicise messages about census recruitment to local community groups and similar organisations, such as local strategic partners, through a range of direct channels including newsletters, emails, libraries, community centres, websites and local events.

We are asking your council team to identify suitable candidates with appropriate experience, such as electoral canvassers and people who worked on the last census, and encourage them to apply for jobs with the 2011 Census.

## 6. Supporting local census field teams

The 2011 Census involves a major exercise in the procurement and distribution of large volumes of supplies and printed materials, and in supporting field teams.

Your council may know of, or own, suitable office accommodation where our managers could train field staff and hold meetings, as well as provide secure storage space for local supplies of materials and equipment, car parking and other facilities.

## 7. Helping us to deliver trusted, quality assured data

Since census data underpins the planning and funding of council services and healthcare, you need be fully confident that our outputs are accurate, relevant and complete.

The 2011 Census is subject to a comprehensive quality assurance strategy. This includes a number of key checks to compare census population figures with information from other sources, monitor returns from target population groups and identify duplicated information and anomalies.

Your local council can assist us by providing comparison survey and administrative data sources, and any feedback on issues that could impact census quality or the accuracy of population estimates for your area.

## Census statistics

We have been consulting widely on the nature and delivery of 2011 Census statistical outputs, presenting our plans and inviting local authorities and other census users to give us their views. We hope to enable 2011 Census users to take their own cuts of the data, based on their specific needs, and download the information into their own computer applications for analysis.

Consultations on the main statistical outputs, census geography and other factors will continue to run through 2010 and any interested parties are invited to comment. To view consultations go to <http://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011-census/consultations/index.html>

Statistics from the 2001 Census can be viewed online at [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk), as printed reports, and on CD/DVD.

## Top ten uses of census data

- Public services funding allocation
- New-build and renovation programmes
- Training and recruitment initiatives
- New or expanded business developments
- Identifying investment opportunities for job creation
- Healthcare and education planning and delivery
- Planning and developing transport infrastructure
- Improving living standards across all social and ethnic backgrounds
- Local intelligence for public sector activities and private investors
- Genealogy research

## Key contacts and information

Enquiries about our partnership activities with local authorities and community liaison should be emailed to: [census.communications.team@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:census.communications.team@ons.gsi.gov.uk)

Contact details for census regional champions, census liaison managers and assistant census liaison managers are listed on the IdeA Communities of Practice at <http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk/comm/a-z-index.do>. You will need to register to access this content.

The following local authority resources can be found at [www.census.gov.uk/la](http://www.census.gov.uk/la)

- Link to us web page template
- Local authority partnership guide
- Local authority communications toolkit

More about the 2011 Census Data Quality Assurance Strategy can be found at <http://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011-census/process-info/data-quality-assurance/index.html>

More information about 2011 Census recruitment can be found at [www.censusjobs.co.uk](http://www.censusjobs.co.uk)





Your census liaison manager is:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel no: \_\_\_\_\_

Your assistant census liaison manager is:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel no: \_\_\_\_\_