

SCOTTISH POPULATION SURVEY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

18th April 2007 MINUTES

Present

Rob Wishart	– Office of the Permanent Secretary (Chair)
Julie Wilson	– Office of the Permanent Secretary
Louise Appleton	– Office of the Permanent Secretary
Sara Grainger	– Office of the Permanent Secretary
Janette Purbrick	– Office of the Permanent Secretary (Minutes)
Leicha Rickards	– Office for National Statistics (via audio-link)
David McPhee	– Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department
Ian Máté	– Development Department
Stephen Hinchcliffe	– Development Department
Sandra Campbell	– Education Department
Andrew Macartney	– Education Department
Julie Ramsay	– Health Department
Beth MacMaster	– Justice Department
Donna Easterlow	– ERAD
Ganka Mueller	– General Register Office for Scotland
Ian Grant	– ISD
Coryn Barclay	– Fife Council
David Hazle	– Glasgow City Council
Sonnda Catto	– NHS Scotland
Jane Parkinson	– NHS Scotland (visiting non-SPSCC member)

Apologies: Jill Alexander (Health), Emma Stevens (Health), Sharon Davidson (Education), Sam Coope (Education), Barry Stalker (Justice), Matt Perkins (OPS), Louise Virdee (OPS), and Niamh O'Connor (OPS).

Welcome and introductions

1. Members old and new were welcomed to the meeting. Apologies were noted. Ian Grant will represent ISD in place of Colin Fischbacher and Sara Grainger will replace Ellen Lynch for FRS updates.

Minutes of last meeting and actions

2. Paper 07/01 provided an update of the SPSCC action points from 2006 that had been carried forward to 2007. Janette Purbrick advised that action points 06/10 and 06/12 were being prioritised during May and June 2007.
3. Regarding action 06/08, Leicha Rickards explained that the early indication was that the sexual orientation question being tested within the Omnibus Survey had been well received causing little offence. The risk factors involved in adding it to other surveys had been assessed as low therefore it was being added to the Omnibus and General Household Survey in January 2008 then later on into the Expenditure and Food Survey. Janette queried whether it would be designated a core question which Leicha replied was a topic of debate with more work needed as a snag is whether the question can be asked by

proxy. So, it will not be designated as a core question at the moment; more likely to be included in a core module. Focus group work will be undertaken.

4. Julie Wilson sought and received confirmation from Leicha that it was 'Sexual Identity' that was being asked about.
5. David Hazle mentioned that Glasgow City Council's recent staff survey included a sexual orientation question which 8% of staff opted to refuse to answer and highlighted that a greater percentage of GCC staff 'refused' to answer questions on religion. David McPhee noted that there are issues around why respondents refuse some questions. Leicha confirmed that the focus group will try and tease out the 'no response'/'prefer not to say' outputs from the sexual orientation question testing.

ONS Integrated Household Survey

6. Leicha Rickards summarised the main points in Nikki Bennett's *Paper 07/02* and SPSCC members noted that the IHS would be delayed until the new survey case management system was implemented. In the meantime, ONS intended to introduce their core questions in January 2008 into the component surveys that make up the IHS. Members noted that this is the harmonisation process being adopted in Scotland currently.
7. Ganka Mueller inquired about the relationship between the IHS and the 2011 Census. Leicha replied that there is overlap of the Census and IHS core but a review was taking place to ensure maximum alignment.
8. In response to Ganka's query about the role of the IHS in improving migration statistics, Leicha reported that the LFS residency rule may change following a proposal to drop the 6 month residency filter so that the survey can pick up migrant workers. David McPhee asked about weighting.
9. Ganka also asked for an update on data linkage which Leicha explained was being looked at as part of ONS Independence. It was mainly the IHS component surveys that had been looked at thus far and there were plans to introduce a question for respondents about taking part in future research.
10. Rob Wishart flagged up that under Statistical Independence and the Statistics Reform Agenda, ONS will need to obtain devolved administrations permission (probably via a formal request) to collect statistics.
11. Julie asked when will we see the revised IHS core. Leicha advised dependent on IHS steering group thus likely to be late May/early June.

Action 07/01 – Leicha to provide update of IHS core.

Scottish Executive Survey Updates

12. Rob proposed that due to time constraints within the meeting, future SPSCC meetings would not necessarily include survey by survey verbal updates. Instead only major changes and common issues should be verbally reported upon with the written update paper being the main source of survey update. On this occasion though, in addition to *Paper 07/03* containing written updates on SE large scale surveys, verbal updates were provided as follows:

Scottish Household Survey

13. Stephen Hinchliffe mentioned the data/scripting problems currently being encountered by SHS raising the issue that other SE surveys could go through similar problems if they also award their contract to a consortium of contractors.
14. The average interview time is running at 55 minutes even although the SHS contract is a 45 minute interview. SHS is paying more money to the contractors for this extra 10 minutes.

Scottish Health Survey

15. Julie Ramsay will award a new contract in July finalising the questionnaire content first. Emma MacCallum, formerly SHS, joins Julie's team.
16. OCS thanked Julie for her offer of testing some of the SE harmonised core questions currently under development by the Scottish Harmonisation Working Group. Thanks were also noted for Beth MacMaster from the Crime Survey who has made a similar offer.

Labour Force Survey

17. David McPhee advised that LFS will continue to conduct telephone interviews NOCC as face-to-face interviewing was judged too expensive (approx £500,000 per annum). Response rates for Highlands and Islands are deemed satisfactory although some concern around missing parts of the population that are simply not on the phone. The proposed ethnicity boost to the LFS is still being investigated with ONS carrying out a pilot exercise.
18. Ganka Mueller inquired how the LFS sits with the IHS with regard to NOCC. David replied that it fits due to its unclustered design and the fact that the results are fairly robust. A new telephone survey company will provide further improvements thus stabilising the fit even more.
19. Ganka expressed her concern that Scotland has full access to IHS data relating to respondents in Scotland for the purposes of record linkage. David confirmed that anonymised micro data from the LFS was available to ETTLD ASD but no identifiable data was being passed to SE at present and there would need to be discussions with ONS to determine if this would be possible. Ganka has asked Duncan MacNiven to raise the issue of data access with ONS senior management. The group discussed what other issues there are with respect to Scotland's participation in the survey that need to be considered at the planning stage, in addition to questionnaire content. David explained that he was satisfied with the size, the design of the sample and the field method in the LFS, which forms the basis of the IHS in Scotland.

Scottish House Condition Survey

20. Ian Máté informed members about the users' forum on 19th April as well as some methodological work on imputation, weighting and grossing that he is embarking upon.

Scottish Crime and Victimization/Justice Survey

21. Beth MacMaster gave a very brief overview of her written paper.

Family Resource Survey

22. Sara Grainger explained that Income Statistics team had moved from OCEA to DD with more staff expected to join them. Julie Wilson asked that thanks be noted for Ellen Lynch's contribution to the SPSCC.

Growing Up in Scotland

23. Janette gave a very brief overview of Sharon Davidson's written update.

Tourism, Culture and Sport Module

24. Sandra Campbell brought up the scripting problems being experienced in her module, commenting that a considerable time difference existed between the different scripts.

25. Ian Máté said that the contractor had been asked to track and log all problems in each script to build up a database that would prove useful in the future to know which questions are missing or have changed. Louise Appleton inquired whether compulsory use of certain interviewing software could be built into contract terms and conditions but Ian answered that contractors invest heavily in particular software so we couldn't insist on a particular software even if multiple contractors involved in a contract.

Longitudinal Surveys

26. Louise Appleton told the group about the Longitudinal Research Analysts Network that has been established and proceeded to provide members with an update on the Millennium Cohort Study and the Scottish Longitudinal Survey which was launched in St Andrews last month.

GROS: Census and Alternative Sources Update

27. Ganka summarised her paper 07/04. Of particular note was that she is undertaking some experimental work with data linkage and is evaluating 3 potential software packages.

28. David Hazle, on the subject of ethnicity, raised some issues from his Equality colleagues who were concerned about what they perceived to be an inability to record skin colour discrimination. Ganka invited David to express these concerns through the Census Consultation. Julie Wilson gave a useful update on the ethnicity work being undertaken by OCS and GROS currently and stated keen interest in David and his colleagues' views and concerns.

29. David McPhee asked about the census form being a 3 or 4 page document. Ganka advised that 3 pages is likely as the longer the form, the poorer the data quality and the lower the response rate.

Scottish Harmonisation Working Group Update

30. Referring to Paper 07/05, Janette Purbrick expressed gratitude to the members who have given up their valuable time to join the SHWG which meets up to review the SE socio-economic core. Using the ONS harmonised questions as well as Census 2001 and published questionnaires for Scotland's large scale surveys, so far 6 core questions have been reviewed and another 8 questions will be examined before the summer which means 14 questions should be ready for testing coinciding well with the questionnaire testing planned for the Health and Crime Surveys during 2007. Janette advised that the core equality questions would be examined later in the year to incorporate the major work being done on these questions currently. Janette confirmed that minutes from SHWG meetings would be available on the internet shortly. Members agreed with Janette's summary that a very positive start has been made to establish a harmonised question bank for Scotland's surveys.
31. Julie Wilson suggested that SHWG should feed back to the National Harmonisation Working Group at ONS regarding the core question work being undertaken.

Action 07/02 – Janette to update NHWG on work of SHWG.

Methodology Forum Sub-Group (Survey Harmonisation)

32. Janette Purbrick and Stephen Hinchliffe had met with Dette Cowden who leads the main Methodology Forum to discuss the way forward for this group. A list of topics had been prepared covering methodological issues common to all surveys like weighting, sampling, grossing, imputation, seasonal effects, advice on minimal sample sizes, time series, aggregation over time etc. Using published technical reports, Stephen had put together a very useful paper on sampling methods undertaken in Scotland's large scale surveys. The first step for the sub-group is collation of technical reports, technical spreadsheets and written papers that already exist so that we can build up a reference library of what we have done so far and what methods are available. It is envisaged that this will prove to be a useful survey management tool. This information would be made available on the intranet and/or the internet. The next step will be to gather methodological experts via a cross-office group (hopefully with the services of a Masters or PhD student) and assess the information with a view to harmonisation possibilities and potential. The work will count towards CPD. The aim will be to produce guidelines for good practise. The group will liaise with the Methodological Advisory Committee at ONS.

HEPS update

33. Janette gave a short summary of paper 07/06 which posed the question whether the decommissioning of the NHS Health Education Population Survey (HEPS), now set to become a module of SHeS, was the start of the Scotland's surveys integrating. Ian Máté spoke about the work being done to align SHS and SHCS as well as the amalgamation of local authority housing surveys into the SHCS. Beth MacMaster advised the committee that there is a call for the Police Force Survey and the Court Users Survey to be integrated into the new Scottish Crime and Justice Survey and that the experience of the SHeS and HEPS will be instructive to their position in this debate. Julie Ramsay highlighted another

option for bringing surveys together would be to encompass local authority health survey needs within the main SHeS.

34. This trend was acknowledged by Rob as major leap forward in thinking and practise for Scotland's surveys and that coupled with the fact that surveys were being redesigned with a core and module approach and unclustered design (money permitting) akin to the IHS design, was very promising indeed. The SPSCC long term strategy was discussed and Janette was asked to update it in line with these recent developments.

Action 07/03 – Janette to update the SPSCC Long Term Strategy.

35. On the HEPS situation, members are very keen to hear how this will fit within SHeS especially regarding the fact that HEPS is a 58 minute questionnaire in its own right. Sonnda Catto will provide an update for the SPSCC within the Survey Update section of the agenda at future meetings. Sonnda said that integration was dependent upon final costs and contracting arrangements between Health Scotland, the Scottish Executive and the contractor, but that the current situation looked very positive.
36. Coryn Barclay asked if HEPS results would be available at health board level. Sonnda confirmed that the sample will be too small to do so on an annual basis but that it would be feasible if results were aggregated over a number of years. There are no current plans to report at regional level but this will be considered if there is widespread demand from boards.
37. Note – Point 5 on Paper 07/06 was carried forward to the Survey Manager's Network on 30th May for consideration.

Field Capacity for Scotland's Large Scale Surveys

38. Janette introduced paper 07/07 which had been an action from the last SPSCC meeting.
39. Julie Ramsay inquired whether the capacity could be expressed as number of households surveyed rather than number of CAPI interviews conducted. Janette had produced this chart and will circulate it. Members also asked about a geographical depiction of field capacity. Janette to contact Survey managers to obtain the information broken down geographically.

Action 07/04 – Janette to produce and circulate further field capacity charts.

40. Members concurred that there was a tremendous amount of activity in the large scale survey 'world' in Scotland during the next 5 years and queried if response rates would be affected. It was felt that the survey integration discussed earlier in the meeting would be a small step to ease respondent burden and that future and more major survey integration would further ease such burden. David McPhee raised the issue of survey fatigue. Beth MacMaster explained that people seem keen to take part in the Crime survey while one SPSCC member talked of poor response rates in Glasgow. So, response is not just related to the number of surveys in the field. David McPhee wondered at what point we reach saturation.

41. Louise Appleton mentioned that OCR hold details on smaller scale surveys and that it would be interesting to look at capacity. Members queried what is out there? Could we visit gaps/overlaps? What about Streamlining Bureaucracy work? It was mentioned that some research is commissioned but never gets published.

Survey of Surveys Update

42. Janette provided a brief update on paper 07/08 highlighting that the survey information will soon be available on the intranet. Further enhancements plus a change from spreadsheet to data base format will see the survey information on the internet later in the year within the Survey Harmonisation web page being developed by OCS.

Any other business

43. Sonnda Catto presented her colleague Jane Parkinson's work on Mental Health and Well-being indicators saying that in Scotland, we have some measurement of mental health problems but not well-being. The data for some indicators are already collected in existing large scale surveys, Jane is concerned that if the required questions for these data disappear from survey questionnaires or change, the indicators will be affected. Information is not currently collected for other indicators and Jane wishes to progress the integration of new questions into existing surveys. Jane and Sonnda will attend the next Survey Manager's Network meeting to progress. Sonnda passed members a copy of Jane's briefing paper from December 2006.
44. Rob Wishart mentioned that ONS are conducting work on societal well-being which has not had Scottish Executive consultative input.
45. Louise Appleton highlighted Social Dimension Health methodology work being carried out by Vicki Entwistle and confirmed that she will pass details to Jane.

Date of next meeting

46. Janette proposed that SPSCC meetings reduce in frequency to twice per year to minimise the disruption to the harmonisation work flow. The next meeting will be Tuesday 13th November 2007 at St Andrews House in Conference rooms C&D from 2-4pm.