

## **1. 2009 Census Rehearsal**

1.1 This paper provides SPSCC members with a summary of the current work and events in GROS – Census Division.

1.2 The Census Rehearsal took place on 29 March 2009. The primary aims of this exercise are to:

- rehearse the end-to-end integrity of all systems and operations;
- test the questions;
- rehearse enumeration procedures;
- measure the quality of data; and
- provide GROS and Service Provider's staff with 'census' experience

1.3 The main field exercise, where a team of approximately 100 enumerators delivered, collected and reconciled the completed questionnaires, has been completed. This exercise also allowed us to offer the public the option to complete the census questionnaire online.

1.4 52,859 questionnaires were delivered across west Edinburgh, Lewis and Harris and we have 23,080 responses received to date, an overall response rate of 43.7%. Lewis and Harris (51%) was higher than west Edinburgh (37%), which was expected and follows the general trend of better response rates in rural areas as opposed to urban areas.

1.5 Whilst the majority of responses were in paper form, 11% of the total responses were completed online (13% in west Edinburgh and 7% in Lewis and Harris), providing a very useful test of the internet solution. Feedback from users was very positive, which gives GROS encouragement to further develop the solution (with our contractors) as we roll towards 2011. The online completion option will be promoted in our publicity campaign.

1.6 The final phases of our field operations are the Census Coverage Survey (CCS) and Census Quality Survey (CQS). The CCS has taken a random sample of 3,000 households who have returned a completed census questionnaire and CCS Interviewers will conduct short, face to face doorstep interviews covering a selection of census questions. This will help us to test our proposed 2011 Census field procedures and test the quality of the data we got back during the rehearsal. CCS questionnaires will also be run through the paper data capture & coding solution and the downstream processing system.

1.7 The CQS will take a small sample of households who have returned a completed questionnaire and asks each householder in the sample to answer the census questions again, cross-checking the responses against those provided earlier on the census questionnaire. Where differences are found, the CQS interviewer will attempt to identify why the response is different so that some measure can be extrapolated (in the 2011 exercise) to the national level to gauge the impact on the quality of data that can be derived from answers to such questions.

1.8 The completed questionnaires (not CCS) have been delivered to the processing site, where they have gone through the initial receipt and warehousing phase. Next up is a rigorous phase of system testing (including Operational Readiness Test and Operational Trial) followed by the 'live' processing phase when the questionnaires are pushed through the capture and coding solution from the start of August. Through August and September GROS will receive phased releases of rehearsal data, which will be analysed by our statisticians to help us evaluate the census questions.

1.9 The rehearsal data will also be run through our downstream processing (DSP) solution and we have made good progress with development to date. For the 2011 Census, DSP will be used to:

- complete any missing responses on the census questionnaires;
- remove duplicate questionnaires;
- correct data captured erroneously during the data capture operations;
- remove inconsistencies; and
- prepare the data for dissemination to users.

1.10 As the rehearsal data is received from the data capture and coding process, it will be run through the first steps of DSP, which are Load & Validation, Remove False Records, Multiple Response, Derived Variables (simple input) and Filter Rules. Development of the remaining components of the DSP system will continue throughout 2010.

## **2. Work going on around the Rehearsal**

2.1 By the end of the year, we will have completed evaluation of the 2009 Rehearsal (covering some 21 individual, but interdependent operational areas) and made firm our plans for the 2011 Census.

2.2 We will know enough however by autumn 2009 to lay the Census Order before the Scottish Parliament. This will confirm the date of the census, the population base, types of accommodation to be enumerated and the questions to be asked.

2.3 The Census Order will be followed in January 2010 by the Census Regulations, which will provide more information on how GROS will actually carry out the end to end operational process (such as the requirement for 7,000 field staff). The parliamentary process is a key step in the census programme and we have to be prepared to explain why we have chosen the questions we have for 2011 and importantly, be able to defend our position on questions or topics that are not covered in the 2011 questionnaire.

2.4 Part of that defence will focus on the work carried out over the recent years through various rounds of research, cognitive testing and consultation with users. Whilst we baselined the questions for the rehearsal in 2008, this process of research and testing has continued into 2009 with colleagues in ONS leading on testing of religion, students, citizenship and hours worked questions.

2.5 GROS are at present reviewing proposals for cognitive testing of a national identity question and whole questionnaire testing, the results of which should be known at end July. We are also looking at the possibilities for joint cognitive testing of a long term health conditions question with the Scottish Government. The results of this series of testing and analysis of the rehearsal data from the capture & coding process will help us finalise (by the end of the year) the format and content of the 2011 Census questionnaire.

2.6 In September, we plan to consult with users on our plans for 2011 Census data output and dissemination.