



News Release

Help tomorrow take shape

29 September 2009



Issued by

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Serving up the census test in Birmingham

Taking part in a small scale test of the 2011 Census, Birmingham has seen a workforce of 33 created, a revival of the ancient art of origami, and for many, a serving of statistics with their evening takeaway.

The test will help to evaluate the systems and procedures in place for the 2011 Census and the people of Birmingham will be among the first in the country to road test the new postal and online questionnaire options. Eye-catching origami shapes and statistics will also be popping up in the city, including on takeaway cartons, to help raise awareness and understanding. The origami images symbolise how communities can help shape services in their local area by taking part.

The test has created around 33 new temporary jobs in Birmingham especially suited to local residents, as first-hand knowledge of the city's geography is essential.

Cathy Burnett, census area manager for Birmingham said: "There has been a great response from local residents while recruiting for the rehearsal roles and now that we've got our team in place, we can't wait to get started. Questionnaires started dropping through people's letterboxes yesterday."

Census co-ordinator, Khallaq Ahmed, a Birmingham resident said "I grew up in the area and so I won't have any trouble finding my way around and it's a great opportunity to help the local community."

ONS Census Director Glen Watson, said: "Census statistics are used for local service planning, allocation of funding and monitoring discrimination and so it's very important that they are as accurate as possible. We're asking the residents of Birmingham to help us get it right for the 2011 Census by completing and returning their test questionnaires. It's easy to fill in, confidential and can now be completed online."

The census also shows us a vivid picture of how life has changed over the past 200 years:

- The population of Warwickshire grew fourteen-fold between 1801 and 1991 (after 1981, this included the West Midlands).
- In 1991, one in nine households in Warwickshire had no central heating, compared to a national average of one in five.
- Over the 50 years between 1851 and 1901, the number of people working on railways in Warwickshire (apart from those doing construction work) more than doubled – from just over 1,000 people to just over 2500.
- In 1881 in Warwickshire, eight out of ten women worked as indoor domestic servants: 25 times more than men.
- In 1851, 16 chimney sweeps in Warwickshire were children: aged between 5 and 9.
- In 1881, Warwickshire had 101 architects.
- The population density in Warwickshire rose from 0.6 people per acre in 1831 to 4.3 people per acre in 1991, above the national average of around one person per acre.
- The average number of people per household in Warwickshire went down from five people in 1801 to 2.6 in 1991, just above the national average.

-ENDS-

Facts about the 2009 Census test programme:

- The small scale test in Birmingham will include 17,000 addresses and will utilise some of the procedures and processes being delivered within the rehearsal
- In parallel to the test, a rehearsal is taking place in three other areas - Lancaster, the London Borough of Newham and Ynys Môn – Isle of Anglesey
- In total, around 140,000 households in these three areas will be asked to take part on 2009 Census Rehearsal day, 11 October 2009
- These areas represent a cross-section of the population and include a broad range of housing types
- Everyone is asked the same questions on the same day in order to take a snapshot of the population at one moment
- The census questionnaire is easy to fill in, confidential and can be filled in online for the first time
- The results of the rehearsal and test will not be published but used to improve procedures for 2011
- There are 56 questions in total, 14 are about the household and its accommodation and 42 questions are for each individual member of the household to complete
- Most questions can be answered by a simple tick
- Taking part in the 2009 Census Rehearsal and test in Birmingham is voluntary. Everyone will be obliged to take part in the 2011 Census

For more information on the test or to request a copy of the census questions in braille or alternative languages, please visit www.census.gov.uk or telephone 0300 0200 901.

British Sign Language video clips and audio recordings are also available on the site.