



News Release

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Census rehearsal: Lancaster and Morecambe 'silver surfers' embrace new online questionnaire

Issued by
Office for National Statistics
Segensworth Road
Titchfield
PO15 5RR

Contact
Media Office
01329 44 7654

Email
2011censusmedia@ons.gsi.gov.uk

Visit
www.census.gov.uk/Media

Sunday 11th October is 2009 Census Rehearsal day in Lancaster, Morecambe and the surrounding areas, and the community's 'silver surfers' are poised to test out the new secure online questionnaire.

The Lancaster area is one of just three areas in England and Wales taking part in the 2009 Census Rehearsal which will road test the new online questionnaire and the postal delivery of paper questionnaires planned for the 2011 Census.

One local resident keen to test the new online questionnaire is 68 year old Elisa Armstrong who has spent most of her life living in the Lancaster and Morecambe area. "This is the sixth census I have taken part in and I had automatically assumed I would fill it out by pen, but since I've been doing computer courses at the Rainbow Centre in Morecambe, I'm certainly going to complete it online this time."

Like many older residents, Elisa initially embraced the internet as a way to keep in touch with her family here and overseas, but as her skills and confidence has grown her use has evolved to making purchases and desktop publishing. By filling in the questionnaire she is also ensuring

future generations of her family and genealogists are able to build a colourful accurate picture of the past.

Jonathan Ayre, census area manager for Lancaster said: "Information gathered from the census helps the government allocate funding to local authorities, and in turn helps local authorities decide where it is best spent. How many teachers and doctors are needed; plans for public transport; help with community projects like the Rainbow Centre; they all depend on the number and type of people living there."

ONS Census Director Glen Watson, said: "Residents of Lancaster, Morecambe and the surrounding areas who are taking part in the rehearsal will by now have received their questionnaires. We would like everyone to fill them in on Sunday 11th October, or as soon as they can after, and then return them to us online or on paper as quickly as possible. This way we can effectively test the systems and processes we have in place and make sure we get it right in 2011."

Facts about the 2009 Census Rehearsal:

- The rehearsal is taking place in three areas - Lancaster, the London Borough of Newham and Ynys Môn – Isle of Anglesey
- In total, around 140,000 households in these areas will be asked to take part on Census Rehearsal Day, 11 October 2009
- These areas represent a cross-section of the population and include a broad range of housing types
- In parallel to the rehearsal a small scale test in Birmingham will be undertaken
- 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
- Everyone is asked the same questions on the same day in order to take a snapshot of the population at one moment
- The census is easy to fill in, confidential and can be filled in online for the first time
- The results from the rehearsal 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 2009 Census Rehearsal 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.

For further information or imagery please contact Jonathan Ayre on B10100@census.gov.uk / 07827 820 509