



# News Release

Help tomorrow take shape

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## Census teams take to the streets of Birmingham

In just four days time on Sunday 11 October, 17,000 households in Birmingham will be asked to complete their 2009 Census test questionnaires. This Saturday, special census rehearsal teams will be taking to the streets of the city to provide help and guidance in anticipation of the test and to answer questions from the public.

In addition to the teams on the street, three community workshop classes are planned at ZQM Online community centre on Thursday 15 October at 10:00am, 10:30am and 11am. Members of the community yet to complete their questionnaires will be able to find out about the rehearsal and ask census co-ordinators directly any questions they may have. Information will be available in a range of languages.

The test in Birmingham will help to evaluate the systems and procedures in place for the 2011 Census including the new online questionnaire and the postal delivery of paper questionnaires. The rehearsal will also test whether the community activities and census publicity do help all members of the community to access the information and advice they need to take part.

The census, carried out every ten years by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), is an estimate of the population of England and Wales. The information given is confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside the ONS. The results are used to provide the information local

authorities need to plan local community services such as transport and housing, and allocate funding.

Talking about the census community workshop classes, Nisha Unis, manager of ZQM Online, said: "We are pleased to be holding workshops on the census rehearsal, it's important that the community are aware that they can make a difference."

Commenting on the importance of supporting the 2009 Census Rehearsal, Stephen Hughes, Chief Executive Birmingham City Council and regional champion for the census said: "The census plays an important role in planning future services for Birmingham residents. The results are used by central government to help allocate the money we and other local organisations have to spend on areas like transport, housing, health and schools.

"The Birmingham test is a valuable opportunity to make sure the correct processes are in place for the 2011 Census; we strongly encourage people receiving questionnaires to complete and return these to help shape census preparations".

ONS Census Director Glen Watson, said: "These activities in Birmingham are important because they give members of the community who may never have heard of the 2011 Census, or who may have difficulties in understanding the questionnaire, the help and information they need.

"By taking part in the rehearsal, people in Birmingham will help to make sure we get it right in 2011. So please fill in your questionnaire and help make the rehearsal a success."

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](http://www.census.gov.uk) or telephone 0300 0200 901.

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