

26 March 2008

Census planned for 27 March 2011

27 March 2011 has been chosen as the planned date of the next Census in England and Wales. A rehearsal for the 2011 Census will be carried out in 2009, and three rehearsal areas have also been announced by ONS.

The Census rehearsal will take place on 11 October 2009 in

- Lancaster
- the London Borough of Newham
- Ynys Môn – Isle of Anglesey in North Wales

The rehearsal will test processes and operational systems for the Census in 2011. ONS will work closely with local authorities in the rehearsal areas to establish effective ways of working together in the preparation for the 2011 Census.

The combination of rehearsal areas was chosen to provide experience of the different factors and environmental conditions which will occur in the 2011 Census.

Glen Watson, ONS Census Director, commented “The 2011 Census is just three years away and there are a lot of preparations for us to make in that time. Testing and checking our plans and procedures is essential to make sure that we collect the high quality information which is depended upon by so many national and local organisations.”

One of the main uses of Census data is to help to calculate the money that local authorities are allocated from central government. The number and type of people in an area determines the amount of money allocated, so the whole population has to be counted to provide good information to plan and fund the services needed.

Glen continued “We are consulting with users of Census data to develop our recommended questions. These recommendations and the Census date will then be put to Parliament for approval and final decision.”

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Plans for the 2011 Census include changes to the operational procedures used for the last Census in 2001. ONS plans to post the forms out to the majority of people rather than hand deliver them, and also people will be able to choose to fill in their Census form on line for the first time.

Glen concluded "These are significant changes, so it is essential that we test the new procedures thoroughly. The rehearsal is a very important part of that, and we are very pleased that all of the local authorities involved are keen to work with us."

BACKGROUND NOTES

1. A Census has been carried out every 10 years in England and Wales since 1801 with the exception of 1941. It is a count of all people and households, and the most complete source of information about the population that exists
2. Census data are used by central and local government, health authorities, businesses and other organisations to target resources effectively and to plan housing, education, health and transport services.
3. During the Census Rehearsal approximately 110,000 households across the three areas will receive Census questionnaires by post or hand delivery, with subsequent follow up of households which do not respond. A temporary field force of enumerators will be recruited to carry out the rehearsal. Census forms may also be completed on the internet. Public participation in the rehearsal is voluntary, and the results will be used for evaluation purposes. There will be no statistical outputs produced.
4. Ten selection criteria were applied in order to determine the chosen areas. The combination selected includes a large two tier area covering sections of a city or town and some surrounding rural areas, an area in London with diverse population and an area in Wales with a high population of Welsh speakers.
5. Selection of the planned date for the Census takes many factors into account including public holidays, school and university term times, potential election dates, daylight hours, etc.
6. Two pieces of secondary legislation have to be passed by Parliament before a specific Census can be taken – the Census Order and the Census Regulations. The Census Order will prescribe the date of the Census and is expected to be laid before Parliament in late 2009. A White Paper will be published at the end of 2008 setting out the proposals for the planned Census operation.

