

2009 Census Rehearsal Evaluation Direct Returns

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2009 Rehearsal – Direct Returns

1. Definition and scope for rehearsal

The standard methods for a household to return a paper census questionnaire are:

- post-back using the pre-addressed return envelope; and
- hand collection by a census enumerator.

Direct returns are census questionnaires which bypass the standard return methods and are received (before, during or after the field enumeration exercise) at Census Headquarters (CHQ), Ladywell House, Edinburgh. Reasons for direct returns include:

- the householder has lost, mislaid or destroyed the pre-addressed return envelope and used a different envelope;
- a lack of trust towards field staff;
- the householder lives locally and has handed it in;
- the field operation is complete (Postal Service Provider (PSP) re-divert returned questionnaires to CHQ after a given date); and
- being handed over by a householder at Census Coverage Survey (CCS) interview.

For the rehearsal, the process was to dispatch direct return questionnaires to the field offices until the start of re-diversion.

Thereafter, all questionnaires would be logged and stored securely in CHQ for delivery to the paper data capture site.

What was tested:

- enumeration/follow-up timetable and procedures;
- redirection service;
- database (Microsoft Excel spreadsheet);
- Field Operations Branch (FOB) resources to log/record direct returns; and
- secure storage requirements.

What could not be tested:

- completion check for non-compliance.

Security

A risk assessment of the storage and access controls in place, was completed for direct returns and security controls were implemented where required. Security awareness training was completed by all General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) staff.

2. Evaluation findings

Pre – determined evaluation points

Description	Success Criteria	Outcome against success criteria	Recommendation	Timeframe
<p>1) Recording of direct returns/undelivered questionnaires during the field operation and notification to the field.</p>	<p>Timely notification to the field to avoid unnecessary follow-up.</p>	<p>Mostly achieved. There were some instances of unnecessary follow-up but this was due to the arrangements for distributing direct returns to enumerators.</p>	<p>a) Create a database to log direct returns and undelivered questionnaires. Database would need to include functionality for notifying the field of direct returns and undelivered questionnaires received during the field operation.</p> <p>b) Highlight the importance of regular distribution of returned questionnaires to enumerators in the field staff handbooks.</p>	<p>March 2011</p>

3. Other evaluation points

Description	Outcome/Issues	Recommendation	Timeframe
<p>1) Late Returns</p>	<p>a) A high number of questionnaires were returned after the field operation had ended, this was due to householders responding to follow-up reminder cards.</p> <p>b) Inconsistent management information between Postal Service Provider (PSP) and Census Headquarters (CHQ).</p>	<p>a) Extend field enumeration follow-up period. Helpline staff will log/record (data entry) late returns. The logistics team needs to be allocated accessible, secure, adequate storage within CHQ.</p> <p>b) Jointly review procedures for collecting management information with PSP. The proposed automated sortation service for 2011 will hopefully address this issue.</p>	<p>Late 2010 to April 2011</p> <p>Mid 2010 to April 2011</p>
<p>2) Census Team Leaders (CTL) distributing direct returns to enumerators</p>	<p>Timescale/delay in enumerators receiving actual questionnaires resulting in unnecessary follow-up.</p>	<p>a) More frequent collection/distribution of Post-back/direct returns from field offices.</p> <p>b) Will consider the frequency/method of transport used for direct returns from CHQ to field offices.</p> <p>c) Defined field notification processes for 2011 including options for non-compliance and electronic notification from CHQ to the field.</p>	<p>March 2011</p>