



Census Data Quality Advisory Working Group (CDQAWG)

Minutes of Census Data Quality Advisory Working Group: 5 August 2010

Present

Peter Scrimgeour

Laura Murison

David Blue

Kirsty MacLachlan

Jan Freeke

Andrew Ballinghall

Cameron Thomas

Tony Jenkins

Paul Davison

Alistair Harvey

Steven Fraser

Heidi Goodship

Tom Snowling (via audio)

Euan Smith

Andrew Macartney

Organisation

Census Director, General Register Office for Scotland (GROS)

Census Data Quality, GROS

Census Data Quality, GROS

Head of Demography Division, GROS

Glasgow City Council

Fife Council

Highlands Council

Dundee City Council

Stirling Council/Local Authority Research and Intelligence Association (LARIA)

Edinburgh City Council

North Lanarkshire Council

Scottish Borders Council

Aberdeen City Council

Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics, Scottish Government (SG)

Local Government Finance, SG

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 Peter welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Census Data Quality Advisory Working Group (CDQAWG) and explained the purpose of the group.

2. Overview of Census Data Quality assurance

- 2.1 Laura ran through a presentation on the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) plans for Quality Assurance (QA) of census results and outlined the progress that has been made so far, as well as highlighting the challenges ahead and how local authorities could aid GROS in their work.
- 2.2 Jan enquired how co-ordinated GROS are with England, Wales and Northern Ireland in their approach to quality assurance of the census results. Laura explained that there are monthly Workshops which are held between all the census offices where specific details are discussed and progress monitored. GROS will be running quality assurance on their own Data Quality Management System (DQMS) but all UK census offices will be looking to harmonise checks where possible. As well as Workshops every month, there is also a Working Group where plans can be discussed at a higher level.
- 2.3 Jan also asked whether it makes sense to look at local authority counts first and not look at Datazone level until later in the process. Laura explained that local

authority level is where adjustments will be made initially as this is the level coverage estimation operates at and then they can be made at lower levels later. Laura also stated that GROS may not have lower level 2011 geographies at that stage so would use 2001 Datazones initially. Paul Fensom stated that for coverage adjustment it is necessary to have a large number of people to get a good confidence interval and that results will be more accurate with a high level population. However, it was acknowledged that some lower level analysis should be carried out in the early stages of QA.

- 2.4 Cameron stated that he was unsure how confident GROS could be with the figures released in May 2012 and advised that local authorities do not have confidence in their migrant counts which is an area that could provide problems. Kirsty stated that GROS are doing extra work on migrant counts and have National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR) data which will be beneficial in helping with these issues. Jan asked if GROS expect to get a lower response from migrant workers and Kirsty stated that this is the case. However, if migrants are not counted on the census, Census Coverage Survey (CCS) or the NHSCR then there is not much that GROS could do so this could provide a problem. Jan stated that GROS need to focus on counting migrant workers and how to adjust for them when missing.
- 2.5 Tom remarked that in previous years occupation questions have been coded very vaguely which is problematic for some users and enquired what is being done to combat this. Paul Fensom stated that the Office for National Statistics (ONS) specify the classification for this, working closely with Warwick University. Both work with the contractor responsible for coding the questionnaires to improve the quality produced. If the system is not confident of an automatic match to an occupation code then the decision on the occupation code to be output goes to a human operator who will be able to investigate the response further. A sample of coded occupations is also quality assured to ensure that the work being carried out by the contractor is of sufficiently high quality. Peter stated that the system the contractor is using can be inventive and use answers to questions on qualifications, industry worked in, workplace address etc. to help determine a persons occupation and improve the quality of the occupation code which is output.

3. Review of Terms of Reference

- 3.1 Laura ran through the Terms of Reference and invited feedback from the group.
- 3.2 Cameron stated that he was not sure how many local authorities have committed people to work on the census and help may not be as readily available as hoped due to the current financial restrictions placed upon local authorities. Cameron asked what GROS would be expecting from local authorities and if the infrastructure was in place to collect comparator data. Laura stated that GROS would be looking for access to data that local authorities would use to compare the census results against or any comparator which they believe would be of benefit in quality assuring the results. However, collection of sources available across Scotland will be coordinated separately and is already being investigated. The purpose of this group is to identify additional sources and to access sources that are specific to a Local Authority. GROS would analyse the quality of the dataset provided and then only use it during the Quality Assurance (QA) process if it was better than what GROS already had access to in-house. Paul Fensom stated that GROS would be looking to get help from people with local knowledge and expertise of areas to identify and explain/resolve any anomalies found. Peter

added that there is a Census Liaison Officer (CLO) in every local authority and that GROS will be speaking to local authorities about many areas of census. The remit of this group is quality assurance only.

- 3.3 Jan enquired if GROS would be organising an event to discuss census quality assurance with all 32 local authorities. Peter stated that this could be arranged if it was thought that this would be useful. However, the event would not delve into as much detail as will be discussed at this Advisory Group. Paul Davison stated that it would be beneficial for GROS to have one to one relationships with people within local authorities so that specific issues could be discussed over the telephone as well as using this group as a forum to discuss QA matters. Discussions over the telephone could then be conducted as required rather than having to wait to discuss any issues found at the next scheduled meeting.
- 3.4 Jan stated that it would be useful if the minutes from these meetings were circulated to the Population and Migration Statistics (PAMS) group for information.

Action Point 1: GROS to circulate minutes to PAMS.

- 3.5 Laura stated that in addition to the six monthly meetings she will keep the group informed of progress via correspondence. Heidi stated that it would be useful for the group to see examples of 2001 anomalies with the census data.

Action Point 2: Laura to circulate some examples of 2001 anomalies.

- 3.6 Jan stated that in 2001 there was little work carried out between GROS and local authorities in the lead up to publishing census results. Peter confirmed that at that time GROS were naturally hesitant but are hoping for there to be more interaction in the lead up to 2011 and beyond.
- 3.7 Peter asked how local government finance make use of census results and Andrew Macartney stated that it is generally Mid Year Estimates (MYEs) that are used to determine funding but there is an obvious link between these figures and those of the census. Heidi stated that it would be interesting to see how funding is allocated as a result of the census and Peter suggested that there could possibly be a presentation on this at a future meeting of the group. Andrew McCartney enquired what role this group would have in resolving differences where they occur between the census figures and comparator sources. Peter stated that the role of this group is solely to advise GROS. Any decisions as to what to do with census figures will be taken by GROS.
- 3.8 Jan asked if GROS will present raw census counts before adjustments are considered. Paul Fensom stated that it would be sensible to use this group for that role but there is a need to find the correct boundaries for presenting this information. Peter added that GROS may review a first cut of the data within this group but each local authority would need to treat this information in the strictest confidence. Cameron stated that it would be beneficial to include this information in the Terms of Reference.

Action Point 3: GROS to add reviewing a first cut of census data to the list of responsibilities of the group and to include a statement on confidentiality.

4. Comparator Sources

- 4.1 A list of comparator sources that have been considered for use in the Quality Assurance (QA) of census results had been circulated before the meeting and Laura stated that she is looking for other sources that aren't listed which may be of use. GROS would be interested in access to sources which are specific to local authorities and feedback on all sources within local authorities (such as the quality of the source). Laura asked if it would be useful to send a template to each local authority asking for the information which GROS would be interested in about the source. Peter agreed that a template would be a good way of collating this information and stated that the sources GROS would be particularly interested in are those which each local authority will use initially to compare the census results against.

Action Point 4: GROS to circulate a table to be populated with information about local authority specific sources that each local authority will use to compare to census results.

- 4.2 Cameron suggested that Household Multiple Occupancy (HMO) data will give a good indication of where to impute missing individuals and stated that each local authority will have a database. Tony stated that this is a good source and that Dundee City have a database with address, maximum occupancy and actual occupancy. Other sources suggested were Landlord Registration Source, Community Care and Citizen Account. Heidi asked whether the Corporate Address Gazetteer would be used and Paul confirmed that GROS's Geography branch will be using this in preparation for the census.
- 4.3 Kirsty asked Jan if he has access to Asylum Seekers data who confirmed that Social Work Services have. On the table of comparator sources it states that Scottish Household Survey data is being provided at datazone level and Euan queried whether this is correct. Laura advised that GROS are receiving this data at datazone level but are unsure as to how much use it will be. If the data is found to not be of benefit at datazone level then the lowest geographic level it will be used at will be local authority level.
- 4.4 Tom enquired if the same level of information is received about independent and state schools. Kirsty stated that there isn't as much detail provided about independent schools as there is about state schools. State school data is provided at school /individual level, which is not available for independent schools. Euan added that the School Leavers Destination Survey could be a useful source and the level of coverage is good. Kirsty stated that it would be useful to add columns for coverage and quality within the template which will be circulated to the group.

Action Point 5: Add columns for coverage and quality in the template to be circulated to local authorities.

- 4.5 Andrew McCartney asked if checks will be done at Communal Establishment (CE) level and if these checks would be done at individual level. Laura confirmed that checks will be done at CE level and will be done at individual level if possible. Whether checks will be done at individual level depends on the type of CE and whether comparators are available at this level .

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Paul Davison asked if it would be worth having a table with a list of contacts within each local authority and stating their level of involvement (e.g. 3. fully involved, 2. correspondence only...).

Action Point 6: Laura to prepare and populate a table with a list of contacts.

- 5.2 Peter stated that at the next meeting General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) would hope to be in a position to be able to demonstrate some of the functionality of the Data Quality Management System (DQMS).
- 5.3 Jan asked what GROS will be doing to measure vacant households. Paul Fensom stated that every household will have a placeholder form to identify why there is a non response from that household.

6. Any Other Business and date of next meeting

- 6.1 Next meeting to be scheduled for January 2011.