

## Welsh Statistical Liaison Committee A National Statistics Joint Consultative Committee Minutes of meeting held on 21 July 2022 Via Microsoft Teams

### Attendees

Martin	Parry	Welsh Government
Sue	Leake	Welsh Government
Steph	Howarth	Welsh Government
Ed	Dunn	Office for National Statistics
Steve	Smallwood	Office for National Statistics
Emyr Gwyn	Edwards	Gwynedd County Council
Lucy	Butler	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Vicki	Doyle	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Eleri	James	Welsh Language Commissioner
Lee	Clarke	Cardiff County Council
Neil	Townsend	Office for National Statistics
Lloyd	Fisher	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Caitlin	Theodorou	Ceredigion County Council
Steve	King	City and County of Swansea
Andy	Wilson	Torfaen County Borough Council
Geraint	Morgan	Powys County Council
Janine	Edwards	Conwy County Borough Council
Gwyneth	Ayers	Carmarthenshire County Council
Rachel	Clegg	Carmarthenshire County Council
Lesley	Rees	Carmarthenshire County Council
Nia	Wyn Vaughan	Gwynedd Council
Nia	Jones	Welsh Government
Elaine	Smith	Wrexham County Borough Council
Helen	Jones	Senedd Research
Jonathan	Wroth-Smith	Office for National Statistics
Sam	Sullivan	Data Cymru
Michael	Cole	Office for National Statistics
Nathan	Lester	Public Health Wales
Nigel	Henretty	Office for National Statistics
Becky	Tinsley	Office for National Statistics
James	Strangis	Cardiff County Council
Gareth	Powell	Office for National Statistics
Cal	Ghee	Office for National Statistics
Fiona	Clay-Poole	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Andrew	Parker	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Alwyn	Williams	Anglesey County Council
Morgan	Lowden	Anglesey County Council
Sergio	Recio	SR

## Speakers

Martin	Parry	MP	Welsh Government
Vicki	Doyle	VD	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Janine	Edwards	JE	Conwy County Borough Council
Jonathan	Wroth-Smith	JWS	Office for National Statistics
Nigel	Henretty	NH	Office for National Statistics
Becky	Tinsley	BT	Office for National Statistics
Sergio	Recio	SR	Office for National Statistics

## Apologies

Hywel	Butts	Welsh Government
Chris	Clarke	Torfaen County Borough Council
Shaun	Davies	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Brett	Davis	South Wales Police
Karen	Hawkes	Denbighshire County Council
Leanne	John	Swansea Council
Paul	Jones	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Wanda	Kirby	Bridgend County Borough Council
Steven	Marshall	Welsh Government
Shan	Morris	North Wales Fire Service
Helena	Snuggs	Sport Wales
Iwan	Wyn Jones	Gwynedd Council

1.	Welcome, Introduction and Apologies	Actions
	<p>Stephanie Howarth (SH) welcomed everyone. See apologies above.</p> <p>Simultaneous translation was not provided as the ten percent quota was not met.</p> <p>SH gave a brief background on the purpose of this special meeting of WSLC. This meeting will cover the recent first release of 2021 Census data and give an opportunity to hear from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) about its quality assurance processes and future plans for demographic data.</p> <p>SH emphasised the importance of having sufficient discussion time and asking questions. If any questions are not covered in the meeting the ONS or Welsh Government (WG) will respond to them afterwards.</p>	
2.	<b>Census results scene setting</b> – Martin Parry - Welsh Government, Vicki Doyle - Caerphilly County Council, Janine Edwards - Conwy County Council	
	<p><b>Martin Parry (MP) shared a presentation giving an overview of the 2021 Census results:</b></p> <p><u>Census results:</u></p> <p>The population of Wales was the largest ever recorded in a Welsh census, with a growth of 44,000 since 2011. This growth came from positive net migration of around 55,000 which was partially offset by 11,000 fewer births than deaths. Population</p>	

growth was lower in Wales than England (1.4% vs 6.6%). Growth in Wales was also slower than any region in England. Due to this, the population of Wales as a proportion of England's population has decreased, which has impacts on future funding levels for Wales.

Newport had the highest rate of population growth of all local authorities in Wales, and the growth in population was generally higher in south-east Wales than the rest of Wales. Several local authorities (LAs) had a declining population which included Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Ceredigion, Conwy, Gwynedd, Isle of Anglesey, and Swansea.

The population of Wales is ageing, with 21.3% aged 65 or older in the 2021 Census compared with 18.4% in 2011. This is a higher percentage than in England and all regions in England, other than the south-west of England. Wales had the highest proportion of older people and the lowest proportion of people of working age of any UK nation.

The number of households in Wales has increased faster than the population, with around 44,400 (up 3.4%) more households in 2021 than in 2011. The rate of growth in Wales was lower than all English regions. Some areas in Wales had a decrease in the number of households over the same period, namely Blaenau Gwent, Ceredigion, and Gwynedd.

Topic summaries of Census data will be released starting in October/November 2022.

Differences between the mid-year estimates (MYEs) and the 2021 Census estimates:

Wales had the largest difference between the MYEs and Census estimates than any English region other than London. Some differences can be explained by COVID-19 impacts and drift in the MYEs in the inter-censal period. For Wales, 20 out of 22 LAs had a lower population in the Census compared with the MYEs, with the exception of Powys and Newport. Several LAs' MYEs showed population growth in the inter-censal period, but the 2021 Census showed population decline since 2011.

The ONS will be publishing a comparison between 2021 Census estimates and rolled-forward MYEs for 2021 in November, to help users better understand the differences in both data sources.

**Perspective from Welsh local authorities:**

Comments from Vicki Doyle (VD)

LAs make a lot of use of census data; it is their richest source of data. The data is used in wellbeing assessments, local development plans (LDPs) and for other strategic work. Due to the relatively large change (between the MYEs and the Census) in the population of Caerphilly, there is a significant challenge for the county.

	<p>There is some mismatch between the decline in population of 3,000 since the 2011 Census, and an increase in the number of households of 2,000. Changes in population will have an impact on funding for the county.</p> <p>The population data is also used in denominators of various indicators, and this will have an impact on the time series. The updating of past population data is important when trying to make the time series consistent.</p> <p>Local authorities need to be able to explain census results to senior colleagues and are keen to build confidence in the estimates. Further investigation is likely needed on the MYEs and 2011 Census to help aid this explanation.</p> <p><u>Comments from Janine Edwards (JE)</u>  Agreement with a lot of what VD said. The census is used to rebase many statistics so a step change in population data will impact on indicators, planning, etc. Rebasing backwards to the 2011 Census will cause changes in various demographic trends. This will have a big impact on policy planning and funding allocation, so the approach to the rebasing will be important.</p> <p>JE suggested potential reasons why changes from 2011 to 2021 were different to expectation. She noted the importance of the 2011 Census as a base for estimates between censuses.</p> <p>It is important not to undermine confidence in the census and population statistics. There is a risk that previous errors in Wales's population statistics could undermine trust, so it will be important to reassure users that the census data is correct.</p> <p><b>Wrap up:</b>  SH thanked the presenters for their contributions and noted that some themes around quality assurance and the release of future population data that were highlighted which will be covered in the ONS presentations.</p>	
<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b>Census quality assurance, estimation, and adjustments process</b> – Jon Wroth-Smith - Office for National Statistics</p>	
	<p><b>Jon Wroth-Smith (JWS) shared a presentation going through Census QA and the use of other data sources:</b>  The slides summarised the coverage strategy for the Census to adjust for over coverage and under coverage. This is an adjustment for households (HH) and communal establishments (CEs) that are counted twice or missed. The adjustment is made using the Census Coverage Survey (CCS) in combination with Census results and other sources.</p> <p>The ONS reviewed Census estimates against Admin-Based Population Estimates (ABPEs). They also worked with LAs to</p>	

identify evidence from local sources. All the feedback from LAs was assessed alongside ONS analysis.

This evidence was taken to a QA panel in the ONS, to decide where further action was needed. Several changes were made in Wales.

These included adjustments to:

- Children aged 0-2 years old based on evidence of births and GP registrations
- Children aged 3-15 years old based on school census and other data on children.
- Households based on council tax data
- Correcting for household and person response rates

In response to a question submitted before the meeting, adjustments for Gwynedd were covered in some detail. There was high uncertainty with the estimate for Gwynedd (partially caused by issues with the CCS) which led to further investigation. The estimates for Gwynedd were adjusted to bring them more in line with the Alternative Household Estimate (AHE). More detail on this can be found in the presentation slides or by contacting the ONS.

### **Discussion**

Emyr Gwyn Edwards (EGE) – thanked ONS colleagues for the further information on adjustments for Gwynedd.

Andrew Parker (AP) – How was information provided by LAs considered and what feedback has been provided to address the issues raised? Can information be shared on the adjustments made for Blaenau Gwent? If there is a desire for further analysis and investigation, what is the process for requesting this?

JWS – Corrective action was taken when there was large uncertainty with the estimates (e.g., as for Gwynedd). This was not done for all LAs. All LA chief executives were contacted after the release of census results with an invitation to discuss the results.

Ed Dunn, ONS (ED) – There is no formal investigation process but LAs are welcome to contact the team to request further analysis. There will also be publications over the next couple of months which will include confidence intervals and information on the LA QA response.

Gareth Powell, ONS (GP) – Expanded on how uncertainty was calculated in the logistic regression model (random effect) and is happy to answer further questions on this.

VD – Noted that the correspondence with Chief Executives may not have been shared with the relevant teams within local authorities. VD recommended contacting census liaison managers as well. VD noted that in her LA, the number of

Action point 1: LA colleagues to contact the ONS directly to request further detail and analysis on Census QA and adjustments for their areas.

	<p>households has gone up by 1,800 but the population has dropped by 3,000. The 0-4 population is lower than expected. She reiterated the point about needing to be able to explain the difference with MYEs so that trust can be built in Census data.</p> <p>JWS – The QA was focused on the getting accurate data for the 2021 Census and understanding inconsistencies. He noted that the rebasing exercise will consider how the population has changed over the last 10 years.</p> <p><b>Further presentation</b>  JWS summarised the final parts of his presentation. These covered the differences between the 2021 Census, the MYEs, ABPEs and the 2011 Census.</p> <p>The ABPEs provide a useful source for comparison as they are independent of census data. The cohort movements between the 2011 Census and 2021 Census were also assessed.</p> <p>Due to the scale of the exercise, it was not possible to give feedback at the time to individual LAs. Further detail will be included in a future report on the QA process. There will not be granular detail, but JWS can discuss the granular adjustments with individual LAs. There will be a new feedback mechanism from September 2022 and case studies with LAs to monitor the transition to a transformed demographic system.</p> <p>To contact the ONS on census quality, please use this email address: <a href="mailto:census.quality.assurance@ons.gov.uk">census.quality.assurance@ons.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>Wrap up:</b>  SH noted that there has been discussion in the chat of how far back ABPEs go which has been picked up by ONS colleagues (one version back to 2011 and one back to 2016).</p> <p>SH thanked JWS for his presentation and members for their contributions.</p>	
<p><b>4.</b></p>	<p><b>Census future work programme</b> – Nigel Henretty &amp; Becky Tinsley - Office for National Statistics</p>	
	<p><b>Nigel Henretty (NH) shared a presentation going through considerations in the production of mid-2021 population estimates:</b>  Nigel went through the background leading up to 2021 mid-year estimates. This included considerations of the COVID-19 pandemic impacts on resident populations in 2021 Census estimates, and the difficulty in determining migration. He also noted that the 2020 MYEs had a relatively high level of uncertainty due to the distance from Census and pandemic data issues.</p> <p>Several comparisons between the MYEs and Census data were shown including confidence intervals. The differences between the 2011 Census and 2010 MYEs were shown. The</p>	

direction of difference was different, but the magnitude was similar compared to this Census (1.9% in 2011, 2.1% in 2021).

The main considerations for producing 2021 MYEs were then covered. There are challenges with both international and internal migration. The issues included behaviour due to the pandemic, use of different data sources and student populations.

The timetable of MYEs, projections and population transformation was given. The 2021 MYEs are due to be published in November 2022, rebased estimates in early 2023, and national projections in late 2023.

The projections take into account population trends and are not forecasts. They use the best available assumptions to project the population. They will use rebased estimates and a range of variants will be produced.

### **Discussion**

NH – Noted that the rebasing will not use linear interpolation. They will look at the distribution of changes over different years, and particularly the changes in the most recent year. To help with this, the ONS will consider the Census data rolled back one year (using previous address data).

JE – The EU Exit and COVID-19 effects are different in Wales compared with England (and London especially), due to our demographic make-up. JE again highlighted the importance of the investigating the appropriateness of the 2011 Census as the base. Not applying the differences linearly across the 10 years will not solve the issue of incorrect trends for Wales.

NH – Confirmed that no changes are being made to the 2011 Census base. Changes will be made to internal migration and student movements to ensure the trends are accurate. We will also look at the Personal Demographic Service (PDS) further back to determine internal migration trends.

VD – Caerphilly does not have armed forces bases, students, communal establishments, or a large foreign-born population so these factors do not explain the changes shown in the 2021 Census. Can these factors be accounted for by the base year, MYE methods etc?

NH – The changes between censuses is the key thing to focus on. This is why we conduct a census to rebase estimates. The population and migration transformation programme will also provide a way forward that captures change in a more timely way using a wider range of sources.

**Becky Tinsley (BT) shared a presentation on the transformation of population, migration, and social statistics:**

The ambition is to have monthly statistics on population, and more timely data for small area multivariate outputs. Some of this would previously be released every 10 years from the census. A timeline of the use of admin data to produce statistics from 2011 onwards was shared. The shocks from EU Exit and the pandemic reinforced the reasons to transform approaches to producing these statistics.

The Admin Based Population Estimates (ABPEs) are often referred to as the Statistical Population Datasets (SPDs) and feed into the Dynamic Population Model (DPM). A real time data dashboard is being created which will give an indication of any emerging trends in the population.

Administrative data outputs so far cover additional topics including ethnicity, housing stock, highest level of qualification, and income statistics. These have been released topic by topic and based on the available admin data. In the next couple of months, they will be producing multivariate admin data outputs.

Going forward, the 2021 Census will be compared to 2021 admin-based data to give an idea of quality and coverage (of the admin data). In future, there may be a new approach of releasing provisional admin based MYEs and then final MYEs once more data is available.

Longitudinal census cohorts and cohort outcomes are also being researched.

Some topics do not have readily available admin data, for example Welsh language and religion. The options for these topics are:

- Require them to be collected in admin data
- Carry out large surveys
- A census

Regardless of whether there is a 2031 Census there are benefits to using admin data to provide more timely estimates of different variables. The final slide gave information on the research and methods used.

Discussion:

SH – The scope of this work to deal with some of the challenges we have discussed today is very clear, to understand population changes during the inter-censal period.

JE – I want to reiterate that the issue is not the 2021 Census data and how that is rolled forward. The issue is how we roll forward the 2011 Census data and how these trends are then used (in projections and strategic planning). This issue will have an impact on users' views of the 2021 Census data.

BT – A time series will also be created back to 2011 with the admin data.

Action point 2: Local authorities in Wales to pass on feedback to BT on the approach of producing provisional and final mid-year estimates.

	<p>SH – It is important for the users of these statistics that the trends are accurate, and trust is built in the statistics.</p> <p>JS – For Cardiff Council, many students were not resident on Census Night but would normally be in Cardiff. Could we meet with the ONS to discuss this? There are 45,000 students in Cardiff (an increase from 2011) but the number of people in the student age cohort has declined. The guidance on where students are counted and whether they plan to return to their university city may have an ongoing impact. This will have knock on impacts on projections and birth trends.</p> <p>BT – Welcomed a follow up conversation with JS on students and would follow up on the points raised. Issues with counting students are complex.</p> <p>ED - We can provide information on the census adjustments for students and give insight on those at other addresses. The pandemic had a big impact on students.</p> <p>SH – Requested that every Welsh LA with a university be sent this analysis.</p> <p>ED – Confirmed that this analysis would be shared. ONS has looked at several data sources including using the occupation of student halls of residence. One thing to leave people with is that there will be a lot of caution with the rebasing and the projections due to the pandemic impacts. The use of admin data going forward will help to give a consistent and stable system without the need for rebasing.</p>	<p>Action point 3: ONS to give details of adjustments and students registered at other addresses to local authorities in Wales with large student populations.</p>
<b>7. AOB</b>		
	<p>SH concluded the meeting and thanked everyone for attending and contributing.</p> <p>The meeting helped to highlight the need for a strong narrative around the Census data. Points had been raised around the impact on funding formulae. Conversations around funding and finance will be taken forward by SH, SL and MP with local government finance colleagues in WG.</p> <p>Please contact the ONS for more information on Census QA, Census releases and the changes being made to demographic data</p> <p>No other AOB was raised.</p>	<p>Action point 4: SH, SL and MP to liaise with Welsh Government local government finance colleagues to discuss the impact of new census on the funding formula.</p>

	<b>Actions</b>	
1	LA colleagues to contact the ONS directly to request further detail and analysis on census QA and adjustments for their areas.	
2	Local authorities in Wales to pass on feedback to BT on the approach of producing provisional and final mid-year estimates.	
3	The ONS to give details of adjustments and students registered at other addresses to local authorities in Wales with large student populations.	
4	SH, SL and MP to liaise with Welsh Government local government finance colleagues to discuss the impact of new census on the funding formula.	