

**Welsh Statistical Liaison Committee
A National Statistics Joint Consultative Committee
Minutes of meeting held on 12 July 2023
Via Microsoft Teams**

Attendees

Phillip	Barlow	PB	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park
Lee	Clarke	LC	Cardiff County Council
Rachel	Clegg	RC	Carmarthenshire County Council
Vicki	Doyle	VD	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Janine	Edwards	JE	North Wales Social Care and Well-being Improvement Collaborative
Lloyd	Fisher	LF	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Steph	Harries	SH	Welsh Government
Eleri	James	EJ	Welsh Language Commissioner
Bea	Jeffries	BJ	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
Steve	King	SK	Swansea Council
Sue	Leake	SL	Welsh Government
Geraint	Morgan	GM	Powys County Council
Victoria	Morgan	VM	Vale of Glamorgan Council
Llio	Owen	LIO	Welsh Government
Hayley	Randall	HR	Data Cymru
Lesley	Rees	LR	Carmarthenshire County Council
Elaine	Smith	ES	Wrexham County Borough Council
Helena	Snuggs	HS	Sport Wales
Jacob	Squires	JS	Welsh Government
Sam	Sullivan	SS	Data Cymru
Megan	Williams	MW	Welsh Government
Nia	Wyn Vaughan	NWV	Cyngor Gwynedd

Speakers

Steph	Howarth	SH	Welsh Government (Chair)
Martin	Parry	MP	Welsh Government
Caitlin	Theodorou	CT	Ceredigion County Council
Steffan	-	S	Cymen (interpreter)

Apologies

Gwyneth	Ayers	GA	Carmarthenshire County Council
Chris	Clarke	CC	Torfaen County Borough Council
Brett	Davis	BD	South Wales Police
Karen	Hawkes	KH	Denbighshire County Council
Nia	Jones	NJ	Welsh Government

Nathan	Lester	NL	Phublic Health Wales
Neil	Townsend	NT	Office for National Statistics
Iwan	Wyn Jones	IWJ	Cyngor Gwynedd

1	Welcome, introduction and apologies – Steph Howarth, Welsh Government	Actions
	<p>SH welcomed everyone. See apologies above.</p> <p>Simultaneous translation had been provided.</p> <p>SH set out that the purpose of the meeting was to understand about the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) consultation on the future of population and migration statistics, and to provide an open forum for discussion on the ONS's plans.</p>	
2	Overview of the consultation by the Welsh Government – Martin Parry, Welsh Government	
	<p>MP gave a presentation about the ONS's consultation on the future of population and migration statistics.</p> <p>MP noted that the Welsh Government (WG) has established an internal advisory group to support the WG's co-ordinated response to the ONS's consultation. He added that the WG will also be establishing an informal external advisory group, as the WG's response will aim to be reflective of the views of wider Welsh statistics users.</p> <p>MP gave a high-level overview of the timeline for the consultation, noting that the ONS will be publishing a summary of the responses, to be followed by a recommendation made by the National Statistician about the future approach to population and migration statistics. Welsh Ministers are expected to respond to this recommendation, with the decision whether to call a census in future remaining with the UK government.</p> <p>MP summarised the ONS's proposals and highlighted the research that the ONS had published recently to support the consultation.</p> <p>MP highlighted the recent publication of new dynamic population model estimates for mid-2022, and the publication of case studies for five local authorities across Wales and England that aim to demonstrate the estimates that would be available in an administrative data based statistical system. MP noted that Caitlin Theodorou from Cyngor Sir Ceredigion would be providing some further information about this, as Ceredigion is included as one of the five case studies, and will include some of her thoughts, in the next agenda item.</p> <p>MP also drew the attendees' attention to the publication from the ONS about its progress and plans for estimating population characteristics, advising them to look at this publication if they were planning to respond to the consultation.</p>	<p>Secretariat to circulate the slides to the group, as well as links to the ONS's consultation and supporting publications.</p>

	<p>MP closed by inviting the group to share their thoughts and views on the ONS's plans, and the possible implications on their work in the discussion planned later in the meeting.</p>	
3	Ceredigion case study – Caitlin Theodorou, Cyngor Sir Ceredigion	
	<p>CT gave a presentation about Cyngor Sir Ceredigion's involvement in the development of ONS's dynamic population model estimates, alongside 13 other pilot local authorities across Wales and England.</p> <p>CT outlined the development process and the engagement they had had with the ONS throughout the various iterations of the estimates since October 2022. She also outlined some of the differences between the various iterations of the estimates, as well as differences between the dynamic population model estimates and Census 2021 and Census 2021-based mid-year population estimates.</p> <p>CT also shared some thoughts about possible under-coverage in the dynamic population model estimates for Ceredigion, possibly linked to fewer administrative data sources being available for Wales than for England. She indicated that local authorities who were taking part in the case studies had shared information about other issues which may be affecting the comparisons, such as areas with higher levels of self-employment and economic inactivity and rural areas.</p> <p>CT concluded by noting some of the benefits and disadvantages of the dynamic population model estimates for Ceredigion, adding that further work would need to be done before having confidence in being able to endorse the dynamic population model estimates (particularly in light of their use in funding allocations).</p>	
4	Discussion	
	<p>MP thanked CT for her presentation and said that he would follow-up with the ONS about the coverage of administrative data sources in the dynamic population estimates for Wales compared with England.</p> <p>BJ noted some similarities between Rhondda Cynon Taf's population and Ceredigion's population in terms of having a mobile student population. She expressed some concern if the dynamic population model estimates don't accurately capture student populations, noting that there were some discrepancies in previous population estimates relating to students.</p> <p>ES noted that the population in Wrexham is varied, with pockets of high deprivation, relatively high levels of economic inactivity, student populations and minority ethnic communities. She expressed concern about the capacity of the new dynamic population estimates to accurately measure these groups of people, as there is a risk that they do not appear on many, if any, administrative data records. ES expressed further concern in relation to the admin-based ethnicity estimates specifically, especially if they appear to be underestimating the number of people from ethnic minority backgrounds, given that</p>	<p>MP to speak with the ONS to understand the coverage of administrative data sources in the dynamic population model estimates for Wales (including any differences with England).</p>

they already think that there is some under-coverage in census estimates. She noted that further work would need to be done to improve the accuracy of these estimates.

RC agreed with everyone else's concerns, noting that there may not be a 'one size fits all' approach for all local authorities in Wales and England. For example, the challenges of estimating the population in urban areas in England wouldn't be the same as some of the challenges of estimating the population in rural areas such as Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion. She noted that some of the issues with the dynamic population estimates in Ceredigion would be similar in Carmarthenshire, given similar population profiles.

GM expressed some concern about the quality and accuracy of some Census 2021 data, and noted the difficulties of benchmarking and recalibrating population estimates and admin-based estimates in future if no census was to take place, despite recent improvements in some of the estimates published by the ONS.

RC noted that users needed to have confidence in the new admin-based system, noting that the methodology needs to be able to be expressed and understood clearly, following similar experiences with trying to understand how Census 2021 data was different to Census 2011 for Carmarthenshire.

BJ suggested that the ONS may want to continue with the census as its primary data collection, as there are some challenges using secondary data collection, i.e., using administrative data collected by other organisations. She mentioned the possibility of a shorter census, focussed on specific topics, so that it could be used to benchmark the admin-based estimates in future.

JE noted that there are challenges with both census estimates and admin-based estimates, but also noted the benefits of being able to compare both sets of estimates for quality purposes. She added that only having one set of estimates would provide some challenges in assessing the quality of those estimates. She noted the importance of high-quality population estimates as they are used for funding purposes. She also noted the advantages of census data in being able to understand population characteristics, providing granular data that isn't available elsewhere. JE noted that the coverage of administrative datasets varies, so there would be some concerns that they would be comparing the characteristics of different sets of people, compared with the census. JE also noted that the census is devolved to Scotland and asked whether Wales would be able to hold its own census in future.

SH responded noting that the other devolved administrations were also considering the future of population and migration statistics in their respective areas, including the role the census might play in a future statistics system. SH noted that there are some data that are currently only available from the census and not available in many, if any, administrative data sources, such as sexual orientation and data on Welsh language ability.

	<p>ES agreed, noting that not having a census in future would lead to lack of granular data for small areas, citing an example of needing to understand how ability in the Welsh language varies in small areas across Wrexham.</p> <p>SK noted that he agreed with all the points raised so far. He mentioned that he had attended a seminar hosted by the ONS the previous day about the consultation. He expressed some concern that there appears to have been limited progress in some areas since the ONS last consulted about the future of the census following Census 2011. He also noted that he thought that most of the focus was on administrative data, and not so much on what role survey data could play in future approaches to population and migration statistics. SK added that he thought it felt premature to possibly make a decision about not having another census so soon.</p> <p>SS questioned whether ONS have any plans to explore data from non-public sector sources, and whether it is likely that public sector bodies might be asked to collect data (or adjust their data collections) on behalf of ONS.</p>	
4	Any other business and close – Stephanie Howarth, Welsh Government	
	<p>SH thanked everyone for attending and for the open discussion. She added that the Welsh Government would be preparing its response to the consultation over the summer months, and that they would be happy to hear from colleagues about their plans to respond to the consultation.</p>	