

**Census Advisory Groups\Papers\1998****Advisory Group Paper (98)05****2001 CENSUS: OUTPUT STRATEGY**

This paper sets out the output strategy for the 2001 Census. It is a framework for each of the main aspects of output, indicating where final directions will depend on consultation, and stating key assumptions.

The strategy is based on the premise that the effort and cost of taking a Census is only worthwhile when the results meet needs and are delivered effectively. The primary objective is therefore to ensure that the value of the investment in the Census is realised by disseminating the results with a content, fitness for purpose, and form that meet user needs. The strategic direction set for the 2001 Census involves major innovations in collection and processing, and the output strategy represents equally radical changes. Repeating the form of output from the 1991 Census in entirety is not an option.

The output strategy is being issued to allow pilot consultations on output to begin, followed by the main consultations shortly after the publication of the White Paper on the 2001 Census.

**The Advisory Groups are invited :**

- a) to note the output strategy as a framework for further development; and
- b) to comment on the directions for development in any particular aspects of the strategy.

**April 1998****Office for National Statistics****General Register Office (Scotland)****Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency**

## 2001 CENSUS: OUTPUT STRATEGY

*Our vision for the 2001 Census combines major innovations with enhancement of current practice. The effort and cost of taking a Census is only worthwhile when the results meet needs and are delivered effectively.*

### Introduction

The primary objectives are, first, to realise the value of the investment in the Census, and the unique picture of the country that it gives, by disseminating the results with a content, fitness for purpose, and form that meets user needs, and, second, to provide ready access to the results for all types of users through good design of products and a high standard of information about them. This accords with the wider objectives of the Census Offices.

To achieve these objectives, customer needs will be foremost at all stages of planning and delivering output, and consultation will play a key role. There will be concurrent release of the main national and local results, with the introduction of new electronic products to give access to any part of the results in pre-planned form or through services to meet special requirements. A policy of innovation will continue throughout the cycle of the Census to keep ahead of changes in user requirements and technology.

### THE STRATEGY

The strategy acts as a framework for each of the main aspects of output within which further development will take place. The strategic direction set for the 2001 Census has major innovations in collection and processing, and the output strategy represents equally radical change.

Key assumptions which influence the strategy are set out at the end of the note.

*Areas for consultation as shown in italics after bullet points.*

### The form of output

- \* Output will follow a pre-announced timetable, made known well in advance, with concurrent release of the main national and local results for the whole country.

*Priorities will be subject to consultation, and the timetabling for the first release of results will be kept under review.*

- \* There will be pre-planned output to convey the full range of the results of the Census in terms of topics and areas, particularly the unique wealth of inter-related variables, and descriptions of small and local populations in comparable terms across the whole country at appropriate geographical levels, issued as reports to Parliament in succinct printed form supplemented by data in electronic form and by commentaries.

*The content of all pre-planned output will be subject to extensive consultation.*

- \* There will be a range of cost effective and speedy services available to provide specially commissioned output under section 4(2) of the Census Acts, and this is expected to replace some of the bulky pre-planned output of previous Censuses, but it is not intended to rely on commissioned output to convey any of the main results of the Census.

*The types of service to be provided will be governed by research into customer requirements.*

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- \* The Census Offices will consider introducing on-line services and requests for the production of samples of anonymised individual records so that customers can have greater flexibility in tabulation and analysis, providing the over-riding requirements of confidentiality are met which will set limits to flexibility.

*There will be continuing consultation on ad hoc products.*

- \* Results will be provided which are as far as possible comparable over time, with other sources and internationally.

*The needs for comparability will be considered in consultation.*

- \* There will be a comprehensive information service covering plans for output, availability of Census results, and all supporting guidance required for the use of the statistics; in particular, information about the quality of the statistics will be issued at the same time as the statistics; information will be regularly up-dated and will be available in electronic form, and will link into Government Statistical Service metadata services where appropriate.

- \* The strategy will be carried through on a GB basis, and where appropriate on a UK basis, with no less uniformity than in the 1991 Census so far as the data collected permit.

### Priorities

- \* High priority will be given to producing and releasing output as soon as the final output database is ready; this will require a rationalisation of products, and the development of output systems, customer testing and acceptance in advance.

*Priorities for output will be considered in consultation, and customers will be invited to assist in tests.*

- \* Improving access to output will have a high priority and will be achieved largely by delivering electronic products direct to the end user in forms which are easy-to-use at all levels of technical and statistical sophistication, but also by a widely available print-on-demand service for standard and customised extracts.

*Prototype systems will be reviewed by customers.*

### Output geography

- \* There are options in England and Wales of output geography based on enumeration districts or on areas specially developed for output from postal geography, with some scope for further flexibility if required, providing the over-riding requirements of confidentiality are met which will set limits to flexibility.

- \* In Scotland, output geography will be based on postcodes.

- \* In Northern Ireland output geography will be based either on enumeration districts or, subject to further research, on areas specially created from postal geography.

- \* Products will be developed which allow statistical and geographical information to be delivered together for geographical information systems.

*Consultation will cover the needs for various geographies and for products which deliver statistical and geographical information together.*

### Confidentiality

- \* Measures will be taken to ensure that confidentiality is protected in all forms of output whilst striking a balance with the flexibility required to deliver results effectively.
- \* It is planned to protect confidentiality through the modification of records in the output database but so that the data when aggregated would not generally produce biased or misleading statistics, and there will also be further measures of protection such as general thresholds below which sets of statistics would not be released.

### Marketing and charges

- \* Census output will have a distinct image within the Census Office and Government Statistical Service 'portfolios'; the distinct strength of the Census lies in coverage of multiple topics and their inter-relationships, and in the comprehensive picture it gives of many different sets of *areas*.
- \* Information will be disseminated through *Census News*, the web sites of the Census Offices on the Internet, and through promotional activity focussed on customers' particular requirements.

*Feedback from customers is encouraged at all times.*

- \* Reports and electronic supplements will be competitively priced at a level which will discourage unauthorised copying and encourage a high volume of sales.
- \* The scope for changing the basis of charging for commissioned output is limited, but every effort will be made to reduce production costs so that customers for more specialised output are not unreasonably penalised by having to commission it and would obtain value for money.

*The basis of charging will be described in consultations, and views sought on charging options where these are possible.*

### Value added reselling

- \* Value added reselling will make an important contribution by complementing the output of the Census Office and provide opportunity for earnings, but a fresh approach is required.

*There will be thorough consultation with current and potential value added resellers.*

- \* Organisations would continue to be thoroughly assessed before becoming value added resellers and would be regularly monitored thereafter to protect the good name of the Census.
- \* Licensed use of the material in reports, particularly in the electronic supplements, or material commissioned under section 4(2) would be offered, and royalties would be set to reflect the value and type of product, geared where possible to volume of sales.

**Customer needs are foremost at all stages of planning and delivering output. Areas where consultation will specifically contribute to the development of the strategy are highlighted in the sections above, but the approach to output from the 2001 Census will be dynamic, and users' views on all aspects of the strategy are welcome at any time.**

## ASSUMPTIONS

### The legal position

- \* The Census Act 1920 and the Census Act (Northern Ireland) 1969, and particularly section 4, will not be changed before the 2001 Census, and no other statute will impinge significantly on the position given by the Census Act.
- \* Devolution to Scotland of the Census legislation will not materially affect the scope for Census comparability across the UK.
- \* Reports printed under section 4(1) may have supplementary content in electronic form.
- \* The requirements of the EU will be met by output from the pre-planned set, and will have equal priority with the national and local results for the UK.
- \* There will be no change in Crown Copyright, for example, affecting the scope to licence the use of material in return for royalties.

### Types of output and charges

- \* Under section 4 of the Census Acts for the UK there are two basic types of output plus licensed use, each of which has distinct charging arrangements:
  - i) reports to Parliament which must be laid under section 4(1) of the Acts, although the act imposes no constraints on charges;
  - ii) statistical abstracts which may be commissioned by customers under section 4(2) of the Acts, either of a pre-planned type such as the 1991 Small Area Statistics or of a more customised type such as the 1991 Samples of Anonymised Records, for which the Act requires a break-even recovery of full marginal costs; and
  - iii) licensed use of pre-existing material under Copyright legislation, usually on payment of licence fees or royalties, although the Census Acts do not give any scope for output to be prepared speculatively.

### The census operation

- \* The plans for there to be 100 percent processing of all variables, followed by adjustment of the output database in a one number census approach, will be carried out with the result that the output databases for all areas would become available more or less simultaneously.
- \* There will be a requirement to protect confidentiality through disclosure control methods applied to output.

### User requirements

- \* There will be a continuing user requirement for printed reports, as well as the statutory requirement.
- \* The requirement for electronic products will be predominantly for use directly on PCs, and the expectation will be for easy-to-use, intuitive products with up-to-date functionality.
- \* Customers will expect basic data to be inexpensive and accessible, and conditions of supply and charging must respond to the ease with which data can be transmitted between end users.
- \* There will be a demand for the main results of the Census to be in pre-planned standard forms at a range of geographical levels, but there will also be an increased demand for customised statistics and geographies.

### Resources and application

- \* The Census Offices will only achieve key parts of the strategy through partnering with users and organisations which provide value-added products and services, but it is not planned to outsource substantial parts of output production.
- \* Technology will continue to change rapidly, and technical aspects of dissemination must not be locked into the state of development at any one point of time.