

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

28th January 2021

Report of: Sheffield Census Engagement Team

Subject: Census 2021 in Sheffield

Author of Report: Richard Crowther, Census Engagement Manager for North East Sheffield
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Summary:

The census is important to all of us. The data collected by the census helps central government and Sheffield City Council shape policy and better plan services and allocate resources. It also provides an important evidence base for equality monitoring.

Everyone takes part in the census, but it is recognised that different people face different barriers to census completion. For this reason, the Office for National Statistics has appointed a network of engagement professionals across the country to ensure that anyone who faces a barrier to census participation gets the support they need to complete their questionnaire, thereby raising participation rates. This results in better, more accurate data, which in turn provides a better evidence base on which decision-makers can establish policy.

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee has requested further information on the engagement carried out within Sheffield, and this report seeks to fulfil that request.

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	✓
Other	

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

The Committee is asked to consider the report and provide views, comments and recommendations.

Background Papers:

The Census White Paper: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-2021-census-of-population-and-housing-in-england-and-wales>

Census Frequently Asked Questions: <https://census.gov.uk/help/frequently-asked-questions/>

Category of Report: OPEN/CLOSED (please specify)

Most reports to Scrutiny Committees should be openly available to the public. If a report is deemed to be 'closed', please add: **'Not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph xx of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).'**

Report of the Sheffield Census Engagement Managers

Census 2021 in Sheffield

1. Introduction/Context

- 1.1 The census is important to all of us and is happening on 21st March 2021.
- 1.2 The data collected by the census helps central government and Sheffield City Council shape policy and better plan services and allocate resources. The detailed snapshot taken by the census enables local organisations and charities to use the data arising from the census as part of funding bids, as well as enabling businesses to plan strategically and providing opportunities for academic research.
- 1.3 It also provides an important evidence base for equality monitoring.
- 1.4 Everyone takes part in the census, but it is recognised that different people face different barriers to census completion. For this reason, the Office for National Statistics has appointed a network of engagement professionals across the country to ensure that anyone who faces a barrier to census participation gets the support they need to complete their questionnaire, thereby raising participation rates. This results in better, more accurate data, which in turn provides a better evidence base on which decision-makers can establish policy.

2. National Context

- 2.1 The census is important because it gives the most detailed information we have about our society. It is a survey that happens every 10 years, and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for the census in England and Wales. The ONS are a non-ministerial department and the UK's largest independent producer of official statistics, as well as being the UK's recognised national statistical institute.
- 2.2 The next Census will happen on Sunday 21st March 2021.
- 2.3 Confidentiality is paramount. Whilst census data is used to plan services, all personal data is kept secure by the ONS for 100 years, before being released for future generations researching their family history. This personal data is not shared with other government departments, agencies or local authorities.
- 2.4 The census is an important tool in equality monitoring, as reflected in our new questions on sexuality and gender identity. These questions are optional, and will only be asked of respondents over the age of 16. The new question asking whether a respondent has ever served in the Armed Forces is an important tool in the monitoring of the Armed Forces Covenant.
- 2.5 The census is easier than ever to complete. For the first time, the census will be digital-first. This is more environmentally friendly and enables faster processing of responses. Search-as-you-type functionality will

make it easier than ever for a respondent to identify as they wish to be identified on the census.

- 2.6 Support will be available for those who need or want assistance to respond online. Paper questionnaires will be available on request to those who wish to respond in that way. These will be posted directly in some areas where we anticipate a high number of requests for a paper questionnaire, but it will still be possible to complete these online.
- 2.7 Everyone takes part in the census and participation is mandatory. It is recognised however that some people may face barriers to census completion. This may be a literal barrier, such as language, or a perceived barrier, such as a respondent not knowing what happens to personal data once it has been supplied to the ONS.
- 2.8 There will be a media and social media campaign to raise awareness of the census and encourage participation.
- 2.9 The ONS has appointed a network of engagement professionals to help address any concerns raised in advance of census Day. These consist of Census Engagement Managers (CEMs), who have a wide-ranging brief for engagement within a geographic area, and Community Advisors (CAs), who have responsibility for engagement with a specific community and often have language skills relevant to their role.

3 What does this mean for the people of Sheffield?

- 3.1 The Office for National Statistics has appointed 3 Census Engagement Managers for Sheffield: Richard Foster in South East Sheffield; Mandy Holden in West Sheffield; and Richard Crowther in North East Sheffield and who has been the lead contact for Sheffield City Council.
- 3.2 The ONS has also appointed Community Advisors for the Arab, Black African, Black Caribbean, Chinese and Somali communities. Further CAs are being recruited for the Pakistani and Roma communities.
- 3.3 Whilst the members of the Engagement Team in Sheffield have their own responsibilities, they have collaborated closely.
- 3.4 Sheffield City Council is a key strategic partner for ONS in delivering a successful census. Officers from the Policy, Performance and Communications Directorate have been designated to liaise with the Census Engagement Team to develop a Local Authority Partnership Plan (LAPP).
- 3.5 The LAPP is a living document used to plan and record census engagement activity in Sheffield. It takes into account the local knowledge and expertise provided both at weekly meetings between ONS and SCC, and via correspondence between meetings.
- 3.6 Engagement has focused on the community groups and channels already embedded within our communities. Where possible this has been achieved through participation in pre-existing meetings.
- 3.7 The census is a positive thing, enabling people to be counted, have their voice heard and identify as they wish, whilst protecting their privacy. The

messaging has very much focused on these positive aspects, and has encouraged organisations and community groups to raise awareness of the census through their communications with their members and other community groups.

- 3.8 The ONS will be hiring many more people in Sheffield to help with data collection. These include the Household Team, who will follow up households who have not yet responded to the Census and provide information, advice and support, and the Communal Establishment team, who will enumerate care homes, hostels, hospitals and similar shared establishments.

4. Considerations related to the Covid-19 Pandemic

4.1 The ONS has planned and built a flexible operation which can adapt to the changing circumstances of the pandemic. They have continued to review and adapt their plans to ensure both staff and the public can be kept safe, and everyone can be safely counted. They are currently ensuring that the right plans and resources are in place to deliver a successful census safely and securely.

4.2 The ONS aims to provide in-person support to complete the census online through Census Support Centres, where it is safe to do so. They will continue to monitor the situation across England and Wales to assess whether and where Census Support Centres can open to provide this service.

4.3 The ONS are committed to the safety of both the public and staff.

4.4 The ONS are encouraging respondents to submit their questionnaire online if they can. Responding online is simple, straightforward and safe.

4.5 The field operation, which follows up those who have not responded and may need help to complete their questionnaires, will be carried out without ever needing to enter anyone's home. All contacts will be socially-distanced and field staff will be equipped with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment as per government guidance.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 The Committee is asked to consider the report and provide views, comments and recommendations.
- 5.2 For further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Census Engagement Managers for Sheffield on amanda.holden04@field.census.gov.uk, richard.foster85@field.census.gov.uk or richard.crowther36@field.census.gov.uk

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