

Future of Census Advisory Groups

Summary

- 1 This paper presents proposals for the future development of the Census Advisory Groups and notes that those meetings usually held in Drummond Gate will from 2008 onwards move to another, as yet unknown venue, but will remain in London.

Action

- 2 **Advisory Group members are invited to comment on particular issues where indicated in the paper, either at the meeting or in writing to cag.secretary@ons.gsi.gov.uk**

Current Groups

- 3 The 2011 Census Advisory Groups are:
 - **Departmental Advisory Group** - Central government
 - **Central and Local Government Information Partnership (CLIP) Census Sub-Group** - Local authorities;
 - **Health Service Advisory Group** - Health authorities and other health service bodies;
 - **Academic Advisory Group** – the Academic community;
 - **Business and Professional Interests Advisory Group** - private sector organisations;
 - **Diversity Advisory Group** - minority groups, the disabled and Third Sector populations (originally named the Special Populations Advisory Group); and
 - **Census Advisory Group for Wales** - stakeholders in Wales;
- 4 The Advisory Groups generally cover users of the Census in England and/or Wales, but the LA Side of the **CLIP Census Sub Group** includes a representative of Scottish Local Authorities, and the **Academic Advisory Group** constituency base is UK wide.

Current Terms of Reference and governance

- 5 The Advisory Groups currently provide a forum for discussion on a wide number of aspects of the Census including:
 - tests and rehearsal plans and outcomes;

- data collection methodology and address registers;
- quality assurance plans;
- local and community liaison;
- outputs, including geography and dissemination media;
- statistical disclosure control; and
- evaluation.

Currently, similar Terms of Reference apply to each of the seven groups.

- 6 Responsibility for chairing the meetings rests with ONS, and hitherto this duty has been shared between the Census Director and his Deputy. The **Census Advisory Group for Wales** is jointly chaired by the 2011 Census Director and the Chief Statistician at the Welsh Assembly Government.
- 7 Issues and outcomes of the meetings are reported to the ONS Census Project Board through the Chair. **Advisory Group members are asked to note that following the recent review of the structure of ONS's internal Boards and Committees there are no plans to continue proceeding with the formation of a coordinating 'Census User Requirements Delivery Board'**, and it is proposed instead that the Advisory Groups be developed to act as the prime means of direct user liaison with ONS on the 2011 Census. Formal and wider user consultation will, of course, continue, on particular issues, as and when these occur.
- 8 Additionally, the **CLIP Census Sub Group** is one of a number of CLIP Sub Groups and as such also reports to the main CLIP Steering Group, which is managed by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Membership

- 9 The strength and level of user/stakeholder representation on the Advisory Groups varies. The **Census Advisory Group for Wales (CAGW)** is supported with an active membership of around 20 most of whom regularly attend.
- 10 The **CLIP Census Sub Group** has 21 regular and active attendees. The LA Side themselves monitor the strength of the local authority membership and provide new blood as and when necessary. Engagement with LAs, both as users and partners, is seen as vitally important to the success of the 2011 Census, and such liaison, in addition to the CLIP Sub Group, is currently being developed through a wider LA liaison strategy by building on the strengths of the current Local Authority liaison programme and developing closer ties with Chief Executives through SOLACE (the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives) and other forums.
- 11 A drive to raise the profile of the **Departmental Advisory Group (DAG)** is in process, and letters have been sent to the relevant Heads of Profession (HoPs) seeking their views on ways to improve Departmental input into

the consultation process. Membership of DAG is at a lower level than Heads of Profession, but HoPs themselves now engage directly with ONS through the newly formed **Census Senior Government Advisory Group (CSGAG)**, which is managed outside the existing Census Advisory Group structure. **The views of DAG members themselves on how Department input might be improved are welcomed.**

- 12 Retaining the interest and support of the **Health Service Advisory Group** has been difficult in a period when changing membership has reflected successive changes in local health area structure and re-organisation within the Department for Health. The Group does, of course, include a number of long-standing members, but ONS are looking to strengthen and widen the base of this Group in order to ensure that it is fully representative of the health user Community. **The views of HSAG members on how this might be achieved are welcomed.**
- 13 Retention of future **Diversity Advisory Group (DiAG)** membership may also be problematic as those issues of particular relevance to individual members are progressively resolved. This Group is primarily a stakeholder group - with particular interests in how the 2011 Census is conducted - rather than solely a user group, and may well be less inclined to be involved in discussions on outputs when these occur.
- 14 Nevertheless ONS believes it is valuable to retain the experience and expertise that this Group offers, particularly in order to inform (a) the design of the data collection methodology in order to encourage and obtain participation of the hard-to-count populations, and (b) any Equality Impact Assessment of the 2011 Census. However, ONS proposes to channel this in two distinct ways by splitting the membership into separate forums: one focusing primarily on issues relating to disability and the elderly; and the other on identity, religion and language issues. ONS accepts that there may be some overlap of interest and thus membership of both groups would not be excluded. The two Groups would be chaired by the Head of Census Field Operations. **The views of DiAG members to this proposal are welcomed before any decision on how to proceed will be made.**
- 15 Both the **Academic Advisory Group (AAG)** and the **Business and Professional Interests Advisory Group (BAPIAG)** have small but very active and involved membership, gleaned to a large extent from membership of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Market Research Society's Census and Geodemographic Group (CGG) respectively. Those CGG members who represent value-added resellers additionally engage with ONS through the separate forum of the Association of Census Distributors **Association of Census Distributors** (formerly the Association of Census Agencies) (ACD). **The views of members on the needs and options for extending membership of these groups are welcome.**

Frequency and location of meetings

- 16 Advisory Groups traditionally meet separately twice a year but receive papers as and when relevant between meetings. A common agenda is generally adopted for the meetings, and more recently, in order to utilise ONS resources more efficiently, joint meetings have been convened for particular pairs of Advisory Groups, namely:
- **Departmental Advisory Group** and **Health Service Advisory Group**; and
 - **Academic Advisory Group** and **Business and Professional Interests Advisory Group**.
- 17 Occasionally, in lieu of a round of separate meetings, a larger convention of all Advisory Groups has been convened. The last time this occurred was in November 2003.
- 18 There are no plans to change the frequency of meetings.
- 19 Meetings are generally held in London at ONS Drummond Gate, though the LA Side usually hosts the **CLIP Census Sub Group** meetings either at City Hall or the LGA headquarters at Smith Square. The Welsh Assembly Government hosts the **Census Advisory Group for Wales** at Cathays Park, Cardiff.
- 20 Consideration is being given to the location of future meetings once the facilities at Drummond Gate are lost when the London rump of ONS locates to Myddleton Street in Islington in April 2008. Although there will be some facilities for meetings at the new location, it may be necessary to use an alternative site in London and this is being explored. **Advisory Group members are invited to offer suggestions.**

Secretariat

- 21 Hitherto, responsibility for the Secretariat for the Census Advisory Groups has been managed as part of the work of the former Legislation and Communications Branch within ONS. Since internal divisional re-organisation this has nominally rested with the new Stakeholder Management and Communication (SMC) Branch.
- 22 While resources within SMC are for the time being limited, it has been recognised that there is within ONS Census Customer Services sufficient expertise and experience in handling users' data requirements for them to take forward the work necessary for organising meetings and recording Minutes. **Advisory Group members will, therefore, want to be aware that Census Customer Services are now responsible for the Secretariat of the Census Advisory Groups.** Contact will be maintained via the cag.secretary@ons.gsi.gov.uk mailbox.