

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CENSUS ADVISORY GROUP**CGAG (09) 11 CAG****2011 CENSUS: POSSIBLE MORATORIUM ON HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS****Introduction**

- 1 CGAG Members will be aware that the Government's White Paper, 'Helping to shape tomorrow', setting out the UKSA's proposals for the 2011 Census, was published in December¹. Many of the proposals set out in the White Paper are aimed at seeking to improve overall response rates for the Census and to minimize differential non-response across the country.
- 2 This paper seeks to get a general cross-government agreement to work to maximise coverage of the 2011 Census by planning the timing of any Departmental surveys in 2011 such that they do not overlap with the census field work.

Choice of date for the 2011 Census

- 3 The choice of the date of the next Census - 27 March 2011- is a key factor in the attempt to improve census coverage and quality and is central to much of the planning that surrounds the event. The date has been chosen to maximise the number of people at home and to ensure minimum interruptions to the delivery and collection of the questionnaires. In selecting the date a number of factors have had to be taken into consideration:
 - maximising number of people present at their usual residence (by, for example, avoiding holiday periods);
 - maximising the number of students present at their term-time address;
 - avoiding local elections (when the publicity messages may get confused);
 - allowing sufficient hours of daylight for field work;
 - avoiding holiday periods in order to maximise recruitment/retention of field staff; and
 - harmonisation across the UK.

Timing of field work

- 4 The field work necessary to deliver the questionnaires to each household, collect the completed returns, and carry out a large-scale post-enumeration coverage survey will extend from about one month before

Census day to three months after. During this time it would clearly be advantageous to the Census field staff if there were no competing national or local household surveys in the field, since any simultaneous activities of this kind would be likely to affect response both in the census itself and in other household surveys.

- 5 The timeframes for the several field activities are set in Table 1. As part of its 2011 Census Local Authority Liaison Programme, ONS have sought an agreement with Local Authorities that, wherever possible, they will try to avoid any local surveys during the period March to June 2011.

Table 1 Timetable of 2011 Census field activities

Phase	Timetable	Percentage of addresses covered nationally
Address check	early May – end August 2010	30
Postal delivery	early March – end March 2011	95
Hand delivery	early March – end March 2011	5
Non-response follow-up	early April – early May 2011	~ 20
Census Coverage Survey	early May – early June 2011	1

Action

- 6 Members are invited to discuss, and where it is possible similarly agree to a moratorium on any Departmental-commissioned household surveys at this time.

Reference

¹<http://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011-census/2011-census-project/legislation/index.html>