

Population and Migration Statistics (PAMS) Committee Scotland

Minutes of the Population and Migration Statistics (PAMS) Committee (Scotland)
10th May 2022.

Present

Ryan Scott (**Chair**)
Laura McGinley (**Minutes**)
Aileen Cameron
Alan Ferrier
Alex Pritchard
Andrew Ballingall
Andrew Gasiorowski
Beth Watson
Bruce McMaster
Cara Connachan
Christopher McCrum
Clare Leadbetter
Daniel Burns
Danny McAllion
Elizabeth Mann
Esta Clark
Esther Roughsedge
Fiona Tweedie
Gregor Docherty
Heather Smith
Heidi Goodship
James Arnott
James Reid
Joe Adams
Julie Ramsay
Kathleen Shirkie
Kerry Gadsdon
Kirsten Ammah
Lara Olszenka
Lesley Mann
Lynsey Bunnefeld
Michael Atkinson
Peadar Morgan
Piers Elias
Rhiannon Batstone
Ronan Mellin
Rosie Convey
Ruby Adam
Sandy Taylor
Sara Townsend-Cartwright
Sarah Nodwell

Organisation

NRS
NRS
Argyll and Bute Council
NRS
NRS
Fife Council
PHS
NRS
Dumfries & Galloway Council
Improvement Service
NRS
NRS
NRS
Renfrewshire Council
NRS
NRS
NRS
Church of Scotland
Dumfries & Galloway Council
Highlands & Islands Enterprise
Scottish Borders Council
Glasgow Council
Edinburgh University
NRS
NRS
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
ONS
NRS
NRS
North Lanarkshire Council
NRS
Highland Council
Bord na Gàidhlig
NRS
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Scottish Water
Scottish Water

Stefania Sechi	NRS
Susie Rose	NRS
Tony Craig	NRS
Tricia Couper	NRS
William Howes	NRS

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 Ryan Scott begins meeting and provided an introduction.
- 1.2 The minutes of the previous meeting (PAMS (21) 13) were approved without comment.
- 1.3 Action Points from Previous Meetings (PAMS (21) 13)

Action Point 2021.1: Joe to check whether the recent and future publications list can be made more prominent on the NRS website. Closed – wider work has been undertaken to simplify and focus the website, and Joe will provide a more detailed update during Demography updates.

Action Point 2021.2: Beth to look into adding more geography layers to the Small Area Population Estimates (SAPE) map data visualisation. Esther updated that the team is considering whether this can be managed in time for the publication of updated figures in the next few months.

Action Point 2021.3: Ryan to pass on question about change in hours for census enumeration roles. Closed - this was passed on to Census Communications and Operations for follow up.

2. Demography Updates

2.1 **Statistics Engagement and Promotion (PAMS (22) 02)**

Joe Adams gave an update to the group on recent developments from the Statistics Engagement and Promotion unit, from each of the three branches.

Statistical Promotion and Analysis: the branch plans to update [Scotland's Population 2020 - The Registrar General's Annual Review of Demographic Trends](#). The intention is to build on the success of the significant changes to the approach of last year's publication which was awarded an Analysis in Government Award, in the Communicating Analysis category.

A user survey has been completed for the [council area profiles](#), with feedback from users of the profiles being presented, as well as recommendations for next steps to improve the output.

The website is being tidied up, removing around 130 web pages that were not required or being used – the majority of these related to the 2011 census. The

branch has also been supporting teams to increase the accessibility of spreadsheets, particularly for the use of screen readers, for example.

Relating to Action Point 2021.1 above, the work to simplify the website has been undertaken in batches, with input from content specialists within NRS initially removing unnecessary web pages. Going forward, engagement with users will provide insight into the redesign and improvement of remaining web pages.

Statistics Dissemination: the branch has been responding to queries and disseminating weekly statistics on deaths involving COVID-19, produced by Vital Events; as well as processing requests across the range of demographic topics covered by NRS.

Data Access: the branch has been providing secure extracts of census data for data linkage research projects – allowing public benefit to be derived from census data, whilst maintaining data confidentiality.

Commissioned census tables are being provided to customers who are unable to access the required information in existing published tables.

Finally, the branch is involved in a project to supply census origin-destination data, to inform analysis of journeys made between home and place of work/study.

2.1.1 Ryan Scott noted that the team would benefit from feedback from PAMS members if any updates to the website or accessibility of spreadsheets have been noticed, in particular if the removal of any web pages have caused problems for users.

2.1.2 Ryan Scott further highlighted that although the data access branch makes detailed data available to researchers, there is a whole body of work being undertaken – from data linkage across Scotland to data sharing. The branch would like to provide an update on this at the next PAMS session, so Ryan requested that PAMS members could highlight specific areas that would be of interest, given the breadth of work undertaken in this space.

2.1.3 James Arnott requested clarification around the project involving origin-destination data, whether this was census data from 2011 or the upcoming census data that would be available to researchers. Ryan Scott confirmed that 2011 census data is used currently, although it is planned to make 2022 census data available when possible.

2.1.4 James Arnott asked a follow up question about how the census was handling people working from home. Ryan Scott noted that the question set has not been changed since it was finalised prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a question referring to one year ago as well as the current situation, which will be useful. Ryan further highlighted that NRS may be more fortunate than the Office for National Statistics (ONS), given that there is not a lockdown during Scotland's Census, which may prove beneficial. It was further indicated that data processing will run as planned, quality assuring against other data sources, and presenting the data as a

snapshot of circumstances in March 2022 – with the assumption that the current situation is closer to a new normal than one year ago.

2.2 Population and Migration – PAMS (22) 03

Esther Roughsedge presented an update to the group on the recent work of Population and Migration statistics.

Population Projections: national population projections were published in January 2022, with results being the first for many years to indicate population decline over the next 25 years. The excess of deaths over births is projected to outweigh net migration, resulting in an overall decrease in the population. These were interim projections so have no variant or council level projections associated. The set of 2021-based national populations is provisionally set to be published in 2023, which will include projection variants, local authority level projections and household projections.

Esther provided a link to a recent presentation at the David Hume Institute, including more in depth analysis of population projections: [What is the future of Scotland's populations? — David Hume Institute](#).

First outputs from Scotland's Census 2022 are due to be made available in 2023, after which they will be incorporated into a subsequent set of population projections, most likely 2023-based.

The results from the latest projections will be presented at the annual [BSPS Conference](#) in September 2022, and the team is interested in demonstrating the impact of projections on local authorities.

Esther would like to showcase some examples at the conference, and requested that PAMS members get in touch with population.migration@nrscotland.gov.uk if they have examples of how the projections are used, as well as the impact on local services or changes to policy.

Population Estimates for Settlements and Localities: the mid-2020 based population estimates were published in March 2022, providing estimates for settlements – groups of densely populated postcodes – and localities. High density postcodes are aggregated into settlements and localities, with local authorities then being consulted to quality assure the boundaries.

There were changes around the communication of these statistics, including accessibility and consultation, since the last publication in 2018. These included shortening the publication, and the introduction of both accessible tables following GSS formatting, and HTML based interactive maps of settlements for quality assurance, as well as online interactive maps as part of the publication ([Settlements and Localities 2020](#)) This enables boundary information to be viewed more easily in the absence of GIS software. Esther highlighted that feedback from PAMS members on the publication and consultation process would be welcomed.

Mid-year Population Estimates: mid-2021 population estimates are in progress, accounting for changes to Scotland's population from July 2020-June 2021, making it the first Scottish population data to cover a full year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Publication has been delayed due to updated methodology and the subsequent requirement for further quality assurance of international migration estimates, produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The work being undertaken by the ONS should ensure the highest confidence in the published international migration estimates, which will in turn improve the quality of Scotland's mid-year population estimates. Users will be updated when a rescheduled publication date is confirmed.

Esther also noted that the delay in this publication may have a knock-on effect on the release dates of other dependent publications, including migration statistics, small area population estimates and population estimates for centenarians (and people aged 90 and over).

Migration Statistics: migration flow tables for mid-2021 have been delayed due to the delay of the international migration estimates, similar to mid-year population estimates above.

Population by Country of Birth and Nationality: estimates for mid-2021 were published in November 2021. A new weighting method has been introduced, meaning that breakdowns below EU/non-EU levels, and comparisons over time, are less reliable and should be treated with caution, except comparisons with the reweighted data.

The decision has been taken to cancel the next publication of Scotland's population by country of birth and nationality estimates, due to the Annual Population Survey (APS) being reweighted, which will not be complete until Autumn 2022. The ONS have also cancelled their equivalent publication, with a UK wide approach of waiting until November 2022 before the next publication.

2.2.1 Danny McAllion provided feedback from discussions at the recent local authority meeting, highlighting that there is a large appetite for these statistics to aid the understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and assist in refreshing planning and service documents. Danny also discussed the trends being indicated, for example the growth of the economically inactive workforce, noting that more detailed projections on a council area are highly anticipated by users to inform planning.

2.2.2 Danny McAllion further noted the problem highlighted by users around the differing definitions of the term "locality" within different contexts, indicating that it would be useful to clarify the definition.

Esther clarified that a settlement is defined as an area which is continuously settled by postcodes above a certain density, however settlements can then be broken down into localities, which is more of a judgement issue. Esther provided an example of Edinburgh and Musselburgh – where this area is a single settlement, but is broken down into two separate localities. Therefore, Edinburgh can refer to both the locality

and the larger settlement, which can add to confusion. Esther indicated that input around how to clarify this further would be beneficial. Danny confirmed that it would be acceptable to clarify that there is a more specific definition used by NRS.

2.2.3 Mike Atkinson reiterated Danny McAllion's point, highlighting that it was not a criticism of the definitions of localities and settlements, which are very clear in the data presented by NRS. Mike questioned the best way to attempt to resolve the problem of definitional discrepancy, given the impact on local planning. Mike understood how and why the definition of settlements within NRS was created, however this term differs from local government, where the definition is based on settlement development area rather than being postcode driven.

Mike indicated that there may not be an appetite to challenge this given the impact on ways of working, however emphasised the importance of working on a more sensible approach to common geographies with common definitions. Mike again highlighted that this comment was not a criticism for this group, but was simply noting the bigger issue.

Esther thanked Mike for his input and recognised the points raised, highlighting that although there may not be an easy fix, awareness of the issue is useful.

Action Point 2022.1: Esther to highlight issue of definitional discrepancy around the terms 'Settlements' and 'Localities' to the Statistics Geography Cross Office Group.

2.3 Household Statistics – PAMS (22) 04

Sandy Taylor presented an update to the group on recent work by Household Statistics.

Household and Dwelling Estimates: the publication of 2021 household and dwelling estimates are being worked on currently, and are due to be published in June [now confirmed for 23 June]. This publication will cover a similar range of statistics to previous years. The format of the main report is being shortened and re-styled to improve accessibility. Updated interactive data visualisations will also be released.

Discussions between NRS and the Scottish Assessors are ongoing around a Data Sharing Agreement (DSA). This will enable access and publication of summaries of data on dwelling characteristics. For the mid-2021 estimates publication, breakdowns of dwellings at council and data zone level will be included. Pending the resolution of the DSA, the availability and reliability of survey estimates are being investigated.

Small Area Household and Dwelling Estimates: small area household and dwellings estimates data for 2021 are now ready for publication in June 2022, with the team acknowledging the help received from local authorities around data collection.

In December 2021, household and dwelling estimates for a range of other geographies, including electoral wards and 2015 urban/rural classification, were published on the NRS website. This assists alignment with a range of geographies for which population estimates are published.

Household Projections: The 2018-based household projections published in September 2020 remain the most recent set of projections available.

The next publication is dependent on when the underlying population projections will be updated. A set of interim 2020-based national population projections was published in January 2022. However, given that no sub-national or variant projections were published, updated household projections are not likely to be published until later in 2023, when the next full 2021-based population estimates are anticipated to be available.

Strategic Development Planning Authorities (SDPAs): Previously, publications of household estimates and projections have included statistics for the areas of the four SDPAs in Scotland (city regions around Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow). The Scottish Government's National Planning Framework 4 will replace the SDPA function around statutory development plans, however it is suspected that users will still find it useful for NRS to continue to produce household statistics for the four SDPA areas. Confirmation of this from PAMS members would be useful.

A Strategy for NRS Household Statistics: a strategy paper is currently being drafted to guide work on NRS household statistics over the next few years. For example, on filling some gaps in statistics currently produced, linking to work of other teams within NRS and identifying new opportunities for analysis. The Household Analysis Review Group (HARG) has been consulted on a number of topics as part of this process. A summary of this feedback will be shared with PAMS and other users in the future to further develop the strategy.

UK Household Statistics Groups: The Cross-Government Housing Statistics Group (CGHSG) reviews the quality, coherence and accessibility of housing statistics across the UK. Its next meeting is on 16th May 2022.

The Office for Statistics Regulation compliance check in Autumn 2021 made a number of recommendations around sharing best practice and plans for the household statistics produced by devolved administrations. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) subsequently established a UK group of producers of household statistics – ONS, NRS, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) – to address these recommendations.

Electoral Register Statistics: Electoral register data from December 2021 were published on 5th April 2022. Planning for the December 2022 data collection is underway.

2.3.1 Danny McAllion provided feedback from discussions at the recent local authority meeting. He highlighted that small area estimates are useful, particularly for visualising projections and statistics at various geographies in dashboards, for

training purposes and to provide insight to new council members. Sandy Taylor thanked Danny for the useful feedback.

2.4 Vital Events – PAMS (22) 05

Julie Ramsay presented an update to the group on recent work by Vital Events.

Deaths Involving COVID-19: the weekly publication has been reduced to include the release of the spreadsheet alone, with the report and news release no longer being issued weekly. The detail included within the spreadsheet is consistent with previous publications, including breakdown by sex, age, health board, local authority and location of death.

The more detailed monthly report continues to be published in its previous form, including a full report, spreadsheet and news release, published within 2 weeks of the end of the month it relates to. The release date has moved to Thursday at 9.30am.

Cause of Death Statistics: work is ongoing to release the full range of cause of death statistics for 2021, to be published between June and August, comprising of the Vital Events (VE) reference tables, drug-related deaths, alcohol specific deaths and probable suicides. A new publication will also be released on deaths from Dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

To align publications with standard NRS publications, web sections on deaths from various causes will no longer be updated. Some causes now have their own publications as mentioned above, and data on remaining causes will be included within the VE reference tables.

Avoidable Mortality: the publication of Avoidable Mortality for 2020 was delayed until March 2022 due to delays in OECD to update definitions to account for COVID-19. There were benefits to separating the publication of this from other death statistics, avoiding too much information being published simultaneously, therefore making the data clearer. This separate timescale will continue to be adopted in the future, although 2021 data is aimed to be published at the end of 2022 rather than early 2023.

Deaths of People Experiencing Homelessness: this is still classed as an experimental statistics publication, and development of methodology over the past two years has not been possible due to additional resources required for COVID-19 mortality analysis. Council areas will soon be contacted about plans to push the methodology and data collection forward, enhancing the data included in the publication. Although Julie noted that people within local authorities that would be approached are not necessarily in this meeting, any thoughts or feedback from any PAMS member are welcomed.

Life Expectancy and Healthy Life Expectancy: healthy life expectancy for 2018-2020 was published in February 2022, with life expectancy for 2019-2021 being due in September 2022 – although the Office for National Statistics (ONS) data which is

typically published on the same day will be delayed this year, so the NRS publication will be published alone.

Baby Names: baby names for 2021 were published in April, however additional analysis of historic birth records going back to 1855 was unable to be included in this publication. This is aimed to be added to the website or app later this year.

2.4.1 Danny McAllion provided feedback from discussions at the recent local authority meeting, highlighting the importance of mortality data throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, with additional users monitoring statistics more closely than previously. Additionally, the alcohol and drug related deaths are considered prominent statistics now, awaited by a variety of users to update planning and to inform work on cutting alcohol and drug related deaths.

Danny additionally emphasised the use of healthy life expectancy and life expectancy data, with many local authorities monitoring life expectancy in areas with different levels of deprivation. The importance of factoring in healthy life expectancy in addition to life expectancy alone was highlighted.

2.4.2 In relation to deaths of people experiencing homelessness and the follow up work contacting council areas, Bruce McMaster offered assistance in providing contacts to push this work forward. Bruce praised the valuable statistics produced from a tremendous amount of work, and emphasised that if any help can be provided to progress this work, to get in contact.

Julie Ramsay confirmed that contacts are already available but it would be useful to contact other parts of the council. Further, it would primarily be contacts on the housing side, for example asking for lists of addresses used for temporary accommodation, but investigating what additional information could be provided. Julie indicated that they would likely be contacted directly, and thanked Bruce for the kind offer of assistance.

3. User Engagement

3.1 User Engagement on Council Area Profiles

Joe Adams thanked any PAMS members that had already provided feedback, and presented recent work on [Council Area Profiles](#) (CAPs).

There was a desire to engage with users to evaluate the CAPs, with an overall goal to identify primary uses of the CAPs and any aspects that were not being used, as well as identifying any improvements required or needs that could be better met. This presentation covers the survey that was used to engage with users, the results of the survey, and tentative next steps based on those findings.

The user survey was kept short, with work undertaken to reduce the question set as much as possible, making the survey quick and easy to complete – taking less than 5 minutes to respond to on average. The total number of responses received was 37, comfortably exceeding the target of 10 or above.

- Responses to the first question around main uses of the CAPs indicated that the main users were Scottish Councils (around 50%), with the primary uses being for information (50%) and downloading spreadsheets (30%).
- The second question related to the value of different elements of the CAPs, and was split up into sections including charts, commentary, data in HTML tables and data in spreadsheets. Generally results indicated positive responses, with a rating of “very valuable” for most of the outputs. The most mixed responses were received for Data in HTML, with 38% very valuable ratings. This may indicate that users are more used to data presented in spreadsheets rather than HTML.
- Responses to the counterfactual third question, around the impact on work if the CAPs didn’t exist, indicated that the CAPs allow the automation of work that would otherwise have to be undertaken manually, or would require additional paid resource to undertake. This was positive to hear, as it demonstrated that the CAPs appear to be filling a need.
- Responses to the final question around any other feedback around the CAPs was largely positive. The majority of respondents mentioned no changes that would be beneficial, whilst 7 respondents requested more granular data.

With regards to next steps, there are no immediate actions being highlighted by the survey results. In terms of accessibility and usability, currently charts are included as image files alone, however these could be updated to display individual data points when a mouse hovers over the chart, for example. Further, on a general level, ensuring that general good practice is implemented such as the orientation of text and charts, and readability on smaller screens, for example.

A blog will be written recording the findings from the survey, and the plans being implemented in response to this.

Action Point 2022.2: Joe to circulate slides from presentation to PAMS

3.1.1 Ryan Scott highlighted the positive level of engagement, particularly with regards to the counterfactual question. Ryan noted that there may have been a perception that the use of CAPs would be more secondary for people who attend PAMS, so noted that it was interesting to see that users are working directly with profiles to answer questions.

3.1.2 Aileen Cameron noted in a message that an increase in granular data would be useful, including island populations. Esther Roughsedge got in touch with her after the meeting to discuss what is available.

4. Scotland’s Census 2022

4.1 Report on Progress

Esta Clark provided an update to the group on recent work on Scotland's Census 2022. Return rates to the census were not what were required by the end of April, therefore Scottish Ministers made the decision to continue the operation by 4 weeks to the end of May. Since this decision, 8 out of 10 households have completed the census, so progress continues, with a range of return rates across different local authorities. It was noted that a table including local authority breakdown is published alongside the news release, so local authorities of interest can be viewed.

There has been considerable effort to maximise responses, implementing a range of interventions from additional marketing and communications campaigns, to the initiative of capturing data on the doorstep. There are also plans to implement pop up centres in areas of low response to encourage responses.

Once data collection has concluded for the census, there is then a Census Coverage Survey (CCS). Given that the census has been moved, the CCS also moves out by 4 weeks. This is a separate survey conducted after census day, to indicate how many people and households have been missed by the census. This enables adjustment of the census results, to account for those that have not been included in population estimates. The CCS is part of the standard census design, which was used in both 2001 and 2011.

The CCS is a sample survey with a selection of postcode areas sampled, and once results have been collected, CCS data is matched to census results to indicate those who have completed both the census and the CCS, and those who have completed one but not the other. This can be used to then estimate who has been missed altogether, so population estimates can be adjusted to provide more reliability.

The Census team is working with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) closely around some methodological options depending on the final census response rate, to improve the quality of data to feed into outputs. The possibility of using administrative data to improve the quality of census data used in outputs is also being considered, although it is in the early stages of investigating data sharing agreements, to ensure that all implications are considered and the improvement of data quality would be sufficient.

Esta clarified that regardless of the final census response rate, there are a variety of plans in place to ensure that when outputs reach users, they will have the best data quality possible. The current methodology for both census and CCS data processing is published on the website, as well as papers outlining how the data will be quality assured.

4.1.1 Danny McAllion provided feedback from discussions at the recent local authority meeting, highlighting some people's feelings of surprise that they had not been as engaged in the process as in previous years. Perhaps it was due to the emphasis on community engagement, including the third sector and community planning, that their experiences weren't as heavily relied on as in the past, however these individuals felt that they could have added something more.

Esta Clark provided her apologies if some individuals felt they had not been as involved, confirming that Communications and Engagement had engaged proactively

throughout the census period with local authorities and chief executives. Esta noted that these may not have been the people who wished to be more involved, and apologised that this message had not reached them.

4.1.2 Danny further raised the enumerator roles and the hours involved, indicating that 25 hour contracts may have priced some candidates out of the opportunity, where some of that experience may have been lost.

Esta Clark noted that some staff were taken on under the 25 hour contract, and again apologised if this message hadn't been communicated sufficiently.

4.1.3 Danny raised the issue of the impact of the delay of Scotland's Census on publications in the future, which has caused some concern.

Esta Clark indicated that the impact of the census continuation on outputs is being worked through currently, and an update will be provided once more information is available.

Action Point 2022.3: Esta to provide an update of the impact of the continuation of the census collection period on outputs to PAMS

4.1.4 James Arnott praised the efforts to increase response rates, particularly in Glasgow given it has the lowest return rate. James highlighted the importance of the Census team getting sufficient support from councils, and offered assistance if there are particular issues to be highlighted, noting that it is in everyone's interest to maximise census response rates. Esta Clark thanked James for this offer, and confirmed that she would contact the Communications team to see if there is anything they can do to help.

James further requested clarity on the CCS and using this data to adjust the census outputs, questioning whether this resulted in confidence intervals (CIs) around the data.

Esta Clark clarified that there have been CIs around the census data since 2001, based on the "one number census" approach. CIs have been published for both 2001 and 2011, and the intention is to publish this for 2022 as well. Esta noted that there is the perception that the census is a count, which is pushed in messaging to maximise responses, however the census is an estimate that is adjusted to account for non-response. There is also item-level non-response, in which cases some responses can be imputed, but again, Esta clarified that this is standard methodology, and is not a new approach.

4.1.5 James Arnott further queried if this varies by local authority – if there is more imputed data, whether the confidence intervals are subsequently wider.

Esta Clark confirmed that the precision of estimates will depend on response rates to both the census and the CCS. This information is published alongside estimates, to enable users to make a judgement call about particular uses for the data.

4.2 Local Authority (LA) Quality Assurance Panels

Lynsey Bunnefeld presented an update to the group around a specific element of the census data processing journey that local authority members in this call will be encouraged to get involved in, namely quality assurance panels for data from each local authority.

The statistical quality assurance (SQA) team has a focus on providing confidence that data quality requirements will be fulfilled, with the ultimate aim to prevent, reduce or limit the occurrence of errors in statistical publications.

Quality assurance (QA) is undertaken during every step of the census data processing journey, some of which is being undertaken currently during the paper capture and coding stage of the process, as data is being received. Lynsey reiterated the point made by Esta Clark in section 4.1, that processing of CCS data will also be quality assured. Further, given that the combination of census and CCS data is used to produce total population estimates, the team will also quality assure those processes.

Lynsey is the lead for validation of population estimates (VoPE) within SQA, comparing census estimates to alternative data sources from administrative and survey data to ensure that population estimates are fit for purpose, or if they require further adjustment. This is the step that the team would like local authority members to be involved in.

Quality assurance panels will be created for local authorities, sharing census person and household estimates for each local authority – robust estimates using census data in combination with CCS data – which have already gone through the QA process. The aim would be to identify where these estimates may appear inconsistent with other data sources from local authorities. If a concern is highlighted, any information provided will be assessed by the team to decide whether further investigation is warranted.

The data provided to local authorities will include both census estimates and comparator data sources to provide context – specifically NRS publications of population estimates by age and sex, as well as some population totals from smaller geographies, resident numbers from communal establishments and information about most common countries of birth.

An example was provided of population age distributions, comparing census estimates to a comparator source – in this case, mid-year estimates. This example demonstrated fairly consistent distributions between the data sources, therefore would not be indicative of a potential issue with the census estimates.

With regards to the scope of the task, the aim is to tap into expert local knowledge, backed by evidence, to support the QA strategy. Lynsey emphasised the value of local knowledge, for example awareness of services only available within a given local authority, or in depth knowledge of the impact of COVID-19. Local authorities were asked to consider how comparable these types of sources would be, for example if the timescales are consistent with census, or over a longer period of time.

In terms of the logistics of this activity, local authority members would have secure and controlled access to the data for between two and three weeks, as well as being provided with information around how this data has been collated. A form based system will be used to highlight discrepancies, evidenced by local information that the SQA team does not have access to. Lynsey noted that even if the estimates appear consistent with local data sources, this is a form of feedback so it would still be beneficial to confirm.

It was highlighted that the data being compared will not be in its final form, given that actions may be taken as a result of local authority feedback or other internal QA processes, therefore estimates may still be subject to further adjustment. Further, the data will be rounded, so it was noted that even if estimates are accurate, the figures may not be exactly the same as comparable data sources.

The likely timescale for this data to be shared is Spring 2023, and Lynsey highlighted that either herself or the team lead for the SQA team (Will Howes, William.howes@nrscotland.gov.uk) are available for contact for more information.

Action Point 2022.4: Lynsey to circulate slides from presentation to PAMS

5. Agenda Items for Future Meetings

5.1 Ryan Scott noted that it would be useful for members to consider ideas for future meetings, in particular if anyone wanted to share how census data is used by local authorities. Ryan highlighted that even if the use of data seems routine to users, it is still valuable to NRS as producers of the data to gain insight into the primary uses of it – and encouraged members to get in touch.

6. A.O.B.

6.1 Ryan Scott noted that PAMS meetings would continue to be held online, however highlighted that it would be useful to receive feedback around preferences for online or in person PAMS meetings going forward.

Date and time of next meeting: November 2022 (precise date to be confirmed)

7. Summary of Actions

- **Action Point 2022.1:** Esther to highlight issue of definitional discrepancy to the Statistics Geography Cross Office Group
- **Action Point 2022.2:** Joe to circulate slides from presentation to PAMS
- **Action Point 2022.3:** Esta to provide an update of the impact of the delay of the census on outputs to PAMS
- **Action Point 2022.4:** Lynsey to circulate slides from presentation to PAMS