

**Population and Migration Statistics (PAMS) Committee
Scotland**

Minutes of the Population and Migration Statistics (PAMS) Committee (Scotland) 21
November 2018

Present	Organisation
Alan Ferrier (Chair)	NRS
Andrew Nash	ONS (via phone link)
Callum Purdie	NHS ISD
Danny McAllion	Renfrewshire Council
Denise Patrick	NRS
Esta Clark	NRS
Esther Roughsedge	NRS
Fraser Amos	NRS
Graham Galloway	NRS
Hannah Smith	NRS
Heather Smith	Highland and Islands Enterprise
Julie Ramsay	NRS
Liam Cavin	Scottish Government
Martin Macfie	NRS
Michael Duffy	NRS
Mike Atkinson	Highland Council
Nick Cassidy	Improvement Service
Peadar Morgan	Bord na Gàidhlig
Sara Townsend-Cartwright	Scottish Water
Sarah Nodwell	Scottish Water
Stefania Sechi (Minutes)	NRS
William Langdon	Argyll and Bute Council
Xander Flatt	Edinburgh City Council

Joining later:

Andrew Waugh	NRS
Beth Watson	NRS
Dave Sim	NRS
Neil Hamlet	NHS Fife
Tina Fu	NHS ISD

1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1. Everybody present introduced themselves around the table.
- 1.2. The minutes of the previous meeting (PAMS (18) 11) were approved without comment.
- 1.3. Action points from previous meetings (PAMS (18) 12).

Action Point 2018.12: Esta Clark/Denise Patrick to forward details of Elizabeth Fraser who works on SIMD, to Archie Clarke. Closed – information provided in minutes of last meeting, signposting to published information on statistics.gov.scot.

Action Point 2018.13: Hannah Smith to pass on details of an NRS colleague to consult with Steve Smallwood on technical aspects of the R-Shiny Interface. Closed.

Action Point 2018.14: Liam Cavin to contact Hannah Smith to discuss API use. Closed – At the moment, API use is not suitable for the NRS Council Area Profiles, but this is something that could work well in the future.

Action Point 2018.15: John McCoskry to investigate accessibility issues around new website features like the drop down "Jump" menu. Closed – John McCoskry completed and website was updated with new accessible features, drop down menus, Scotland's fact page.

Action Point 2018.16: Esta Clark and Martin Macfie to investigate whether there would be a requirement for the "Future Publications" link to be included on the website front page. Closed – [Future Publications link](#) is now included on website front page.

Action Point 2018.17: Kirsty McLachlan to follow up with Cliff Beevers to engage with community councils. Closed – Esther Roughsedge did a talk at Edinburgh South West Communities and received positive feedback.

Action Point 2018.18: Sandy Taylor to contact Angela Adams to discuss potential HARG group membership. Closed – William Langdon (Argyll & Bute) has joined the Household Analysis Reference Group (HARG).

William Langdon asked whether the next HARG meeting had been planned because he had not received any email regarding it.

Action Point 2018.19: Sandy Taylor to update William on the latest plans for HARG.

2. Branch Updates

- 2.1. **Population and Migration Statistics (PAMS (18) 13)**

Denise Patrick gave an update on recent work and developments in the population and migration statistics branch which are presented in more detail in the related paper. She mentioned several development projects relating to improvements to the migration processing system and to the use of Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data. NRS have gained access to HESA data and an application is now being made to the Public Benefit and Privacy Panel for Health and Social Care so that these data can be linked with the NHSCR. Denise mentioned the recent [blog post](#) published on NRS Open Book about population estimates for settlements and localities aimed to provide guidance for using these estimates. Denise asked for feedback on the publication from users to help inform future publications, particularly with regards to how the data are being used and the preferred frequency of the publication.

Denise also gave an update on recent publications on Migration Statistics and on the work that was going on with ONS and other member of the GSS to improve migration statistics. A consultation will be issued by ONS in early December to seek views from users on a future migration statistics system. Denise noted that the details of the consultation would be shared with PAMS members and encouraged them to participate.

2.1.1. William Langdon noted that in certain cases the settlement boundaries did not represent the areas that were needed – he gave an example of a specific area in Argyll and Bute. Denise noted that during the consultation preceding the publication, they became aware that some settlements boundaries did not always match very well to built-up areas but that there was a difficult balance between assuring consistency of approach/methodology across all council areas in Scotland.

2.1.2. Mike Atkinson noted that PAMS members had been consulted on these issues but because the methodology was based on postcodes it would be difficult to find a solution. He noted that it was often preferable to create estimates by aggregating lower level geographies in line with the specific requirements of stakeholders, and that councils had a large amount of local knowledge on how best to aggregate from lower level geographies. Denise agreed that there was still work to do to review the methodology together with NRS Geography colleagues, and said she would be happy to receive details of the methodology used for producing locality population estimates from data zones.

Action point 2018.20: Mike Atkinson to share details with Denise Patrick of the methodology that had been used for aggregating from data zones.

Action point 2018.21: Mike Atkinson to present his work on local populations in Highland Council at the next PAMS meeting.

2.1.3. Esta Clark asked Liam Cavin if he would be referencing locality boundaries when producing the Census Output Areas for the 2021 Census. Liam replied that he was not sure but that it was something that would be worth discussing further.

2.2. Statistics Engagement and Promotion (PAMS (18) 14)

Esther Roughsedge gave a brief update on the work of the team which had been created at the start of 2018. In particular she presented a series of successful talks given to different audiences (e.g. Scottish Government teams, members of the public, secondary school children). Esther mentioned that she will be doing a talk and a workshop at the Improvement Service next year.

Esther noted that Kirsty MacLachlan had recently retired and had not yet been replaced. Michael Duffy and Martin Macfie had also both been promoted and were leaving the team.

Alan invited suggestions for how NRS could demonstrate the impact their statistics had been having at local level. He mentioned potential indicators such as monitoring website traffic and also the use of NRS data within policy documents in the Scottish Government.

2.2.1 William Langdon commented that PAMS members were very pleased with all the efforts to communicate and promote NRS statistics with the public, especially with children.

2.2.2 Alan mentioned that NRS were two of the three finalists in the 2018 Scottish Communicating Analysis Awards. This shows that NRS is leading the way on how analysis is communicated across Scottish Government.

2.3. Household Statistics (PAMS (18) 15)

Sandy sent his apologies for not being able to make the meeting.

Graham Galloway gave a brief update on recent work and publications. He noted that a new data source - on new builds data - from the Scottish Government Housing Statistics team would be useful for quality assuring the small area Council tax base data. Graham also mentioned the July publication of household projections had incorporated, for the first time, projections for the National Parks and Strategic Developments Areas (which had previously been released as a supplementary publication). He also noted that data on household projections were now available on statistics.gov.scot. Graham talked about the ongoing work in the branch to compare its methodology for household projections with that used by ONS, noting that the results of this would be shared at the next Household Analysis Reference Group (HARG) meeting.

2.3.1. William Langdon asked whether the new build data would be used for producing policy-based household projections instead of trend-based projections. Graham clarified that the data would be used only for quality assurance of the households estimates. Mike clarified that the new build data were the completions data from Local authorities (New Build 1 and New Build 2 returns) collected by SG Housing Statistics colleagues.

2.4. Vital Events (PAMS (18) 16)

Julie Ramsay updated the meeting on the statistics published by her branch since the previous meeting, including Vital Events reference tables, drug-related deaths, age-standardised death rates by deprivation quintile and life expectancy (the National Life Tables). Julie reported that it was now possible to produce back series of alcohol deaths using the new alcohol-specific deaths definition. The full time series back to 1979 was published in October 2018. Julie also mentioned that a [new web section](#) on deaths from dementia and Alzheimer's disease was published in June. She also noted that national life expectancy tables had been published recently, highlighting the reduction in life expectancy.

2.4.1. Alan asked when the sub-national life expectancy tables would be published. Julie replied that these tables would be published on 12 December 2018.

3. Analysis of NRS Data

3.1. Analysis of recent Life Expectancy trends (PAMS (18) Presentation 01)

Julie presented the preliminary results of the analysis carried out with colleagues in NHS Scotland to identify the causes behind the reduction in the trend of life expectancy. These results had been presented at a mortality trends workshop on 13 November 2018. More details of the analyses can be found in the [presentation](#).

- Julie pointed out that the slowdown in life expectancy growth had been driven by older age groups (60-85).
- In terms of causes of death, ischaemic heart disease has had a large impact on the slowdown for both males and females, while dementia and Alzheimer's show a greater impact for females.
- The analysis also looked at the effect of deprivation: unsurprisingly the most deprived quintile is contributing most to the slowdown, but further analysis was needed because the change in the population has not been taken into account.

Julie also presented the results broken down by council area.

- Glasgow is contributing most to the slowdown in life expectancy for males and females, even taking into account its size of population.
- Aberdeenshire and Highland are contributing less for both males and females, while City of Edinburgh is contributing less for females.
- Fife is contributing notably more than its population size would suggest to the slowdown in life expectancy for females.
- These results are interesting because whatever is driving this slowdown is not happening at the same level across all parts of Scotland. Further work is needed to understand the effect of deprivation, the difference between geographical areas and also for determining the most appropriate period for the comparison.

3.1.1 Alan commented that the work was very interesting and asked how the results compared with similar work by ONS - it would be interesting to investigate whether the patterns south of the border were similar. Julie replied that ONS

would soon be publishing the results of a corresponding analysis for England, while similar work had also been done in Northern Ireland.

3.2. Health and Homelessness (PAMS (18) Presentation 02)

Andrew Waugh and Neil Hamlet presented the results of a NRS data linkage project that links homelessness and health datasets for the first time at a national level. Andrew gave an overview of the three-year project that had fed into a report published in June (<http://tinyurl.com/hhscot>). The study aimed to find out the number and proportion of health interactions attributable to homeless people, and to estimate the number of homeless households that have multiple and complex needs.

- The study considered more than 430,000 people who had been in households assessed as homeless or threatened with homelessness between 2001 and 2016. These people formed the Ever Homeless Cohort (EHC).
- Each person in the EHC was matched on age and sex to a non-homeless individual from the 20% least deprived areas of Scotland, and a non-homeless individual from the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland.
- This formed two control cohorts - the Least Deprived Cohort (LDC) and the Most Deprived Cohort (MDC). Each cohort had the same number of people and the same age–sex distribution.
- In total, the study contained over 1.3 million people.
- The results showed that at least 8% of the Scottish population has been homeless at some point in their lives. Of those, slightly less than half had evidence of a mental health problem and/or drug and/or alcohol-related interactions, a higher proportion than in the control groups.
- Neil highlighted the importance of the data linkage study for exploring the relationship between homelessness and health in Scotland. Neil added that whilst health inequalities across Scotland were well evidenced, the study was a very robust and deep ground breaking piece of work that involved more than 1.3 million people.
- Neil added that this dataset could be reanalysed by geographical area, looked after experience, by prison experience and housing. Neil commented it would be worthwhile to disseminate the results of the study more widely and to revisit/ update it in 5-10 years time.

3.2.1 Alan asked if other national groups were involved and what was the policy impact. Neil replied that an event was held in September for policy people across Scottish Government, and the report gave the opportunity for a high level discussion that was not possible before.

3.2.2 Neil asked which steps were needed to be go through to be able to re-analyse the linked dataset and to link in other data sets. Andrew W. replied that the data linkage team (contact: Claire Wainwright) in the Office of the Chief Statistician were looking into how data from this study could be re-used.

3.2.3 Neil asked how long the entire project could take. Alan replied that NRS are currently working with partners at Scottish Government, ISD and the University of Edinburgh to process data linkage projects faster and to make their re-use more efficient. This is using funding from ESRC and other sources. Alan noted there is

the potential that the homelessness dataset could be made available through this route. Alan asked about the broad impact of the results of the study. Neil replied that the results were presented in Ayrshire, where there was particular interest because the results showed that Ayrshire is a major outlier. He added that all three Ayrshire Councils were very interested in the data and in further analysis of the data, especially on child experiences.

4. Feedback

4.1. PAMS meetings (PAMS (18) 17)

Martin Macfie gave a brief summary of the consultation that NRS had carried out with PAMS members last September. He noted that it was proposed to continue with two meetings per year, and that the likely venue for the meeting in spring would be New Register House in central Edinburgh. He also highlighted the intention to create a bank of topics for discussion at future PAMS meetings, and invited any suggestions for this.

4.1.1 Alan Ferrier invited feedback on how to improve these meetings in the future. He suggested for example it would be useful to have short presentations about how NRS data were used by individual councils or organisations.

4.1.2 William Langdon reported that during the discussion in the pre-meeting, PAMS members were happy with the proposed improvements but wanted to clarify that the name PAMS was a very good established brand and that changing it would potentially cause confusion.

4.1.3 Danny McAllion suggested using webinars that can be shared with other colleagues inside local authorities and other organisations to help improve participation at the meetings.

4.2. NRS Statistics Conference (PAMS (18) 18)

Esther gave an update on the NRS Statistics (PAMS) conference that took place in September at Edinburgh Zoo. She noted that feedback from the 120 conference participants had been very good, and invited any further feedback and preferences on how often these conferences should be held in future.

4.2.1 William Langdon congratulated the organisers for a well-run and enjoyable event, adding that the feedback was very positive and the venue amazing. William suggested the next conference should be set up to cater for two different audiences: a general group and a more advanced data user group. He added that holding a conference every two years was preferred.

4.2.2 Esther noted that PAMS members were a varied audience but agreed that the suggestion to take into account that some people want more technical details was a useful one.

4.2.3 Michael Duffy added that in the September consultation feedback from PAMS members, they also suggested staging a conference every two years.

4.2.4 Alan commented that the parallel conference sessions could be tailored for different audiences, taking into account not only the topic being covered but also the type of audience it was aimed at. Esther added that the talks could be identified as 'technical' or 'general overview' in the conference programme.

4.3. Scotland's Population 2017 (PAMS (18) Presentation 03)

Hannah Smith gave an overview of "Scotland's Population 2017 - The Registrar General's Annual Review of Demographic Trends", which is NRS's flagship annual statistical publication. Previously, this publication had been very text-heavy. Hannah showed comparisons between the 2016 and 2017 publications, to highlight the improvements made to the 2017 publication to make it more engaging for users. Examples of these improvements are available in the [presentation](#). Hannah highlighted that the publication had received very positive feedback from users, who found the infographics to be really engaging. Martin commented that the publication was now designed with text boxes to make it easier for users to pick out key 'take away' messages from the statistics.

4.3.1 Andrew Nash mentioned that ONS was moving away from any paper publications to online only. He asked the reason for producing printed copies of the publication and what was the proportion of people using the printed copies. Hannah and Esther explained that the main report is online-only, and this is the same for all other NRS statistics. The only thing we produce a printed copy of is the infographic summary booklet, because it is useful to be able to hand this out to people. Hannah replied that one of the main reason for producing printed copies was to give them to journalists at the launch event on the day of publication.

4.3.2 Alan noted that an aim of the publication was to reach new users and to iteratively improve it year on year. He added that text boxes could be useful to explain difficult concepts and to emphasise which policies NRS statistics have informed.

4.3.3 Mike noted that the publication is now less impenetrable for users. He also suggested inserting links in the publication to the full tables for users who need more detail.

5. Scotland's Census

5.1. General Update (PAMS (18) 19)

Esta Clark gave an update on the Scotland's Census 2021 programme. Work is continuing with stakeholders with question testing and focus groups. We published 'Plan's for Scotland's Census 2021' in September and these plans are available on our website. Esta reported that the legislation had been taken to the Scottish Parliament for amending the Census Act to allow for allowing the inclusion of potential sexual orientation and trans status questions on a voluntary basis. Esta invited PAMS members to three stakeholder events taking place in November and December in Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow. Esta talked through plans for a rehearsal in 2019 to test our processes and systems in a live situation. The

rehearsal would be centred around 13th October 2019 (harmonised with the rest of UK) for areas within three council areas (Glasgow City, Dumfries and Galloway, Na h-Eileanan Siar). Dave Sim gave a brief update on the work with Councils. Finally Esta updated on the continued investigation into the use of administrative data for the collection, production and quality assurance of population statistics. Esta mentioned that details on future Census events and workshops were available on the Scotland's Census website and encouraged feedback or queries on any aspects of the Census work to be sent to scotlandscensus@nrscotland.gov.uk.

5.2. Plans for Scotland's 2021 Census – proposed question set

Esta presented part of the slides that would have been presented to the stakeholders event in Edinburgh the next day. (Post meeting note: these slides will be available shortly on our website). She highlighted that because the 2021 Census would be primarily online we were taking a digital first approach to the design of the questions. Esta summarised the criteria that were being used for the question design which have been published on our website.

Esta mentioned that there are proposed new questions included trans status, sexual orientation, British Sign Language and passports held. Ministers and the Scottish Parliament would have the final say on the questions for Scotland's Census 2021.

5.2.1 Heather Smith said that it was a shame that the question on household income was not included. Esta explained that research had raised public acceptability concerns and also concerns about the quality of the income information that could be collected in the census.

5.2.2 Mike asked about the inclusion of a question on second homes. He said this would be useful for ascertaining the amount of vacant homes in a council area, adding that the data available from council tax sources presented limitations. Esther replied that the census does collect information on whether properties are vacant or second homes. A question on second homes is different, as it asks whether the respondent has more than one address. This means that it won't include figures on people based in other countries who have a second home in Scotland.

5.2.3 Peadar asked whether there would be a possibility to have access to the results of the rehearsal. Esta explained that the purpose of the rehearsal is to test operational processes and systems in a live environment, not to test the questions or to collect statistically representative information for an area or group of people. Response rates to the rehearsal are likely to be far too low to allow meaningful results to be produced, although if we managed a high response rate in an area then we could, subject to resource, think about how we might share results.

5.3. 2021 Census Output Areas and Data Zones – request for help from users ((PAMS (18) 20)

Liam Cavin gave an update on the SG/NRS plans for the production of 2021 Census Output Areas (COAs) and related geographies, and requested the assistance of

PAMS members. Liam gave an update on the work for designing Data Zone areas using draft Census Output Areas. He gave a brief overview of the process for creating COAs based on Scottish Address Directory (SAD) and on population estimates. Liam noted the intention was to share and seek feedback on proposed data zone boundaries. He asked PAMS members to help quality assure the draft data zone boundaries in March 2019.

5.3.2 Mike reported that PAMS members had had an extended discussion about COA and data zones design in their pre-meeting. He commented that the main limitation of the design would be using SAD at postcode level. Liam confirmed that areas would be built up from postcodes.

5.3.3 Alan asked Liam to give a more formal explanation on that Action point.

5.3.5 Esther suggested that in addition to getting in touch with local authorities, other organisations (especially National Parks) should also be contacted. She noted that existing data zones did not match well with the Cairngorms National Park boundary.

Action point 2018.22: Liam to give more formal explanation on Census geographies.

Action point 2018.23: Liam to provide Mike Atkinson with contact details to Geography colleagues for discussing about the methodology for producing COA and data zones.

Action point 2018.24: Liam to contact the National Parks so they can feed into comments about COA data zone design.

6. Population and Migration Statistics

6.1. Small Area Population Estimates (PAMS (18) Presentation 04)

Beth Watson gave a brief presentation of the new app for small area population estimates that can be accessed at <https://scotland.shinyapps.io/small-area-population-estimates/>. She demonstrated the main features of the app, particularly the option for users to explore the small area population estimates for a local area by entering a postcode. Beth was keen to get feedback from the PAMS members about the app.

6.1.1. Mike asked if it was feasible to select multiple data zones or different geographies. He also pointed out that having a map of the selected area could make the app more easy to use. Denise replied that the app was not designed for experienced users but more for people interested in knowing about the population statistics for the area where they lived in. She mentioned that it was a 'work in progress' and that maps could be accessed in the statistics.gov.scot website. Alan noted that there was a difficult balance to strike between reaching new users and meeting the needs of experienced users, commenting that the app was not aimed at more expert users.

6.2. Sub-Council Population Projections – Discussion re follow-on work from POPGROUP training (PAMS (18) 21)

Denise gave an update on the ongoing work to support users with sub-council area population projections (SCAP) and POPGROUP. She noted that there was still significant demand for small area population projections from members of local authorities but also from other organisations (e.g. health analysts). Denise would welcome suggestions from PAMS members about funding streams we should explore or partners we could approach. She mentioned that a short survey to obtain feedback from users would be issued in the coming weeks. Denise noted she would also like to circulate the survey to PAMS members and would welcome their responses. She would also welcome views from PAMS members about whether they have produced their own population projections for sub-council areas, and whether they would be willing to share any findings as a case study. Denise asked for written comments on any of these points to be sent to sarah.mohammed@nrscotland.gov.uk.

6.2.1. William commented that the POPGROUP training was really good and that additional training would be useful. He added that within his Council they had created a working group for doing the small area projections, bringing together colleagues from different departments. He noted that the Centre for Housing Market Analysis (CHMA) in the Scottish Government had released new guidance which suggests that Councils should not produce their own projections because it was too resource intensive. Denise replied that the small area population projections could be useful in understanding the impact of new housing developments. She asked William if he could share a copy of the CHMA guidance, noting that NRS would seek clarification from Murdo MacPherson and Charles Brown in the CHMA about the guidance referred to.

6.2.2. Denise asked for feedback from councils that had not attended the POPGROUP training course. William replied that the reason for not attending was probably budget related.

6.2.3. Andrew N. asked whether the training was carried out by NRS. Denise replied that it was funded by NRS and delivered by academics; Ludi Simpson from the University of Manchester and Alan Marshall from the University of Edinburgh.

6.2.4. Tina Fu noted that there were interest from ISD colleagues in using the POPGROUP software and asked for advice on how to access it. Esther replied that the software was Excel-based and that a licence was needed. Esta added that it needed time to learn how to manage it.

Action point 2018.25: William to share with Denise copy of the CHMA guidance.

Action Point 2018.26: Denise to contact Murdo MacPherson and Charles Brown to clarify the CHMA guidance to Councils not to produce their own projections.

7. Any other business

Esta noted that the Office for Statistical Regulation is currently looking for people to provide comments to the first assessment check point for the 2021 Census.

Date and time of next meeting provisionally set for Wednesday 1st May at New Register House in central Edinburgh.