

### Introduction

In the last decade the capital has had to contend with the emergence of unanticipated population dynamics such as short-term migration, an increase in birth rates, an increasingly mobile and churning population and the changing nature of family formation. London has been affected more by these complex dynamics than other parts of the country. Over 37 per cent of short term migrants to the country in 2007 came to London, and between 2001 and 2007 there was a 20 per cent increase in births in the capital. Local authorities have borne the brunt of managing limited resources in such difficult circumstances with the job made ever harder by the unanticipated nature of these dynamics (e.g. acutely seen when planning the provision of school places and maternity services).

In the 2001 Census, London, and especially Inner London, had the lowest response rates of any English sub-region. London's diversity and high population churn were recognised as contributing factors. The 2011 Census is likely to be more challenging given the increased complexity of London's population. Rehearsals for the 2011 Census indicate that this trend is likely to continue (Camden and Newham recorded response rates of 35 per cent and 28 per cent respectively). The 2011 Census gives us a once-in-a-decade opportunity to improve the quality of official population data. It is a vital building block which ensures that statistics used in funding allocations and service planning are fit for purpose – not just for London's Boroughs but also for the MPA, LFEPA and the NHS.

The GLA and London Councils recently made submissions to the House of Commons London Regional Committee Inquiry: *London's Population and the 2011 Census*. It is no great surprise that the report (released on 31 March 2010) does not break new ground. Conclusions most pertinent to this paper are that:

- Some Boroughs now have little or no confidence in 2001 Census based population estimates because of poor methodology in dealing with population churn, short term migrants and destinations of migrants to the UK;
- The Committee acknowledged the efforts made by ONS to deliver a successful Census in London but also urged ONS to intensify its dialogue with London Boroughs, especially those with substantial hard-to-count populations.

To not give this topic the attention it deserves now has serious implications in the long-term. The looming public sector spending cuts make getting the count right all the more important. There are three aspects to understanding and counting London's population covered in this paper. We believe that all have the potential to make a difference to public services in London (see judgement criteria below). These are:

- **1) Proposals to improve our Understanding of London's Population** - developing new and timely products that assist London's public sector in anticipating, modelling and better understanding emerging population dynamics.
- **2) Ensuring a good Census count** – the Census will remain at the root of our understanding of London's population, so working with Boroughs and ONS to ensure that the critical success factors are met is important.
- **3) Ensuring that the Census Imputation Methodology works for London** - how the GLA, London Councils and other experts can work with the ONS to ensure the final piece in the Census jigsaw is used as effectively as possible.

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<sup>1</sup> I&DeA Census 2011 Community of Practice

While recognising the important role that Barry Quirk plays as Regional Census Champion we outline proposals below for the contribution the GLA, London Councils and Boroughs can make in these three areas. **We propose to the City Charter Board that a Counting London Project Board is formed** from GLA, London Councils and Borough staff to deliver an agreed work programme which reflects responses to this document.

### Judgement Criteria

The London City Charter Board will select signature projects on the basis of the criteria set out in the table below. An indicative answer in relation to this project has been placed to the answer to each of the questions posed.

Criterion	Response
Is it a political priority?	Yes, especially in relation to delivering services as efficiently and effectively as possible, but also potentially terms of encouraging more active participation in society.
What is the measurable outcome?	Increased participation in the Census and an improved level of enumeration, as measured against ONS critical success factors. Increased/better targeted funding for London, taking account of the fiscal tightening due.
Does it increase efficiency or take the cost out of running London?	Better ways of counting London will lead to more effective use of (financial) resources and better deployment of services in exceedingly tight financial circumstances.
Is this something that will not progress unless we subject it to the City Charter either because a) it is sufficiently contentious that it will only be resolved in the Congress or b) it is uncontentious but needs the impetus the Congress can provide?	Impetus from the Congress would be extremely helpful in unifying thinking around the actions required now and in the near future by ONS, local authorities and the GLA to deliver advantage in the longer term. Taking the debate about potential changes to funding would be contentious and would require City Charter Board leadership, should this be a desired course of action.
The measure of success is unclear and it is therefore helpful to start thinking about the issue and to 'condition the environment'	Measures of success are relatively clear but conditioning the environment would be highly advantageous.

### 1) Proposals to improve our Understanding of London's Population

A project board can develop a programme which is delivered (with ONS) to account for newer, temporary population movements and population dynamics which fall beyond the scope of the current Census data outputs. This could cover:

#### *The practical*

- Short-term migration (migrants staying in the UK less than 12 months are currently not included in population estimates).
- Allocation of in-migrants to London and to the individual boroughs (London may be penalised by the method used to allocate the total number of international in-migrants amongst the UK countries and regions; some boroughs may be particularly penalised by the method of allocation within London).
- Failure to count illegal immigrants (many of whom reside in London).
- Counting daytime population (day visitors to London and commuters who are not counted as part of London's population) and majority-of-time populations (using data on second residences).
- Population churn (the transaction costs associated with population turnover (e.g. registering for council tax, electoral rolls and so on).

- Increase in birth rates and whether these are likely to continue in the short term.

### ***The strategic***

- Anticipating future population trends as a matter of urgency and encouraging ONS to develop and release new data and products, in a timely way, thereby ensuring that local authorities can better understand emerging trends and incorporate these into their planning, service provision and resource allocation.
- Assessing the impact of the recession on population dynamics and migration. For instance is the decline in out-migration from London likely to reverse once the recession has abated or will the recession result in a longer term trend that requires reassessment with regards to public service delivery?
- More broadly, we should also encourage ONS to continue to explore administrative data sources, including data held by individual boroughs, as a way of counting population.

The ONS is already working on some of these areas (short-term migration for instance) and in these areas what will be important is (a) to ensure that this work continues to create a viable and robust measure of short term migrations and (b) ensure that CLG/HMT incorporate this new data into the allocation of funding. In other areas, such as the use of administrative data sources, a longer term strategy must be developed.

For the above, an emphasis will be placed on the development of borough and sub-regional level outputs. The work will build on GLA's existing demography and census analysis and projections which already enhances the ONS' uniform approach to provide outputs tailored to London's needs. Our overarching aim will be to increase its relevance and use by senior public sector officers in the capital (e.g. Chief Executives of the Boroughs and PCTs) in planning London's public services.

## **2) Ensuring a Good Census Count**

Taking the most pro-active approach to the Census count itself remains a vital foundation in understanding population dynamics over the next decade. Indeed, the success of much of the above is contingent on it, but to this we can also add the benefit of increased financial support for public services. Work conducted in Slough unitary authority<sup>2</sup> suggests that each (additional) completed census form is worth £600 to the council alone.

The ideas presented below are to be developed once we have a stronger understanding of the still emerging work programme for the ONS in the capital and how this relates to Boroughs' own activities. But we do consider there to be real value in the GLA and London Councils complementing the ONS' own efforts in two possible ways. We therefore ask that the Board is allowed to develop plans in the following areas.

### **i) the Technical Approach**

Following the example of the US Census Bureau, we can develop a website<sup>3</sup> which helps local councils, census advocates and community volunteers to target outreach efforts for increasing participation in the Census. The US website provides public access to three key types of data:

- 2000 US Census Tract Level Planning Database – gives an indication of those areas that were considered hard to count in the previous Census and their participation rates.
- 2010 Participation Rates – updated daily based on spreadsheets downloaded from the Census Bureau website.
- Contextual data – used to understand the demographic and social nature of hard to count areas.

<sup>2</sup> I&DeA Census 2011 Community of Practice

<sup>3</sup> [www.censushardtocountmaps.org](http://www.censushardtocountmaps.org)

The GLA is in a prime position to be able to establish a similar website for the 2011 Census in London, leveraging previous investment in GIS mapping technology and complementing recent initiatives, such as the London Datastore (indeed, we could ask the developer community to work on their own hard-to-count maps now). The key benefits of establishing a centralised system at the GLA are that it provides a single point of access, saves time and money for the Boroughs (who have different levels of expertise and capability) and helps avoid cross-border issues where hard to count areas cover more than one authority.

## **ii) the Volunteer Approach**

We also think there is value in considering how the ONS' outreach work (e.g. forming local community panels representing minority populations) and dialogue with Boroughs can be complemented. This could potentially be done through:

- A programme to engage front line staff (e.g. receptionists in doctor's surgeries) or other volunteers (e.g. school governors and Parent Teachers Associations). Their role would not be to assist with the completion of Census Forms, but rather to communicate the message that local communities benefit from completing the Census and point people in the direction of online census form completion or community groups engaged on a formal basis to help boost Census participation.
- The approach could be further developed under a new Government's proposals for a programme of community volunteering, potentially with the guidance of the Mayor's Advisor for Social Action and Volunteering. Indeed, we should explore the possibility of the Mayor of London acting as figurehead in a volunteering push, supported by bodies such as the London Voluntary Services Council (who also gave evidence to the London Regional Committee), Greater London Volunteering and Age UK. A cost-effective marketing campaign, potentially using viral marketing across social networks and through the above organisations' networks could also be used to target under counted groups.

## **3) Ensuring the Imputation Methodology works for London**

A final part of the proposed work programme for the Counting London Project Board is to influence ongoing work around imputation. With very real risks of under-enumeration in London, the imputation methods and techniques are critical to ensuring that the London population figures produced by the 2011 Census reflect the 'real' population as fully as possible. Technical experts at the GLA, supported by others from within the boroughs, are well placed to liaise with ONS in creating an imputation methodology that reflects the diverse and complex nature of populations in hard-to-count areas which are disproportionately prevalent in the capital. For instance, involving the Boroughs in taking into account local population information in the development of imputation methods will help to improve the results of the process. The CLIP Census Advisory Group, on which the GLA is already represented, has supported the ONS indication that it will seek an independent review of the methodology.