

Convener
Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

25 October 2019

Dear Convener,

Thank you for your letters of 18 and 24 September in relation to Scotland's Census 2021. The attached annex contains National Records of Scotland response to your letters following the acknowledgement by Amy Wilson on 30 September.

The majority of our response focuses on the work that has been, and continues to be, done on matters related to the sex question. It is fully recognised by National Records of Scotland that there are differing views from stakeholders on how the sex question should be presented in Scotland's Census, with passionate representation being made for biological sex, legal sex and self-identification.

The recommendation from the National Records of Scotland's Government Statistical Services statistician group continues to be that self-identification provides the best balance in meeting the diverse range of user needs across the full Census dataset. This recommendation is based on results of previous testing, approaches taken across the UK, and the feedback from discussions with stakeholders and peers. We have recently commissioned further independent testing by ScotCen which will provide valuable information on how respondents require and use guidance. This work will report in late December 2019.

The resolution of a clear position on the sex question is an important step in the work to progress the census legislation. Our aim for the census is to deliver a set of questions and associated guidance that whilst not necessarily being seen as the perfect solution by all stakeholders and users, is one which enables all of Scotland to access, understand and complete the Census.

Thank you also for highlighting the letter (dated 7 October) that you received from the policy analysis collective MurrayBlackburnMackenzie regarding EU Regulations and their interaction with Scotland's Census. The letter made specific reference to Regulation (EU) 1017/543 and Regulation (EC) No. 763/2008, and I wanted to respond in this letter.

The agreed understanding by National Records of Scotland and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) - who provide the EU with data on behalf of the UK - is that member states use a variety of sources to gather the relevant statistics. This is envisaged by Article 4 of Regulation (EC) 763/2008. The EU legislation on the 2021 population and censuses explanatory notes state:

“EU legislation on population and housing censuses is ‘output-oriented’. The authority and responsibility to develop appropriate census methods and technology remain with the Member States. EU legislation aims to provide census data that are comparable between the EU Member States. To achieve this, the data have to follow a European programme of statistical data and metadata.”

The ONS, in consultation with National Records of Scotland and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, will agree how best to present the UK statistics and how any differences in methodology will be described or handled so as to help users when interpreting the outputs. There is no requirement on the individual nations to constrain definitions and methodology to exact duplication of approach. However, in presenting the statistics to the EU, ONS will set out in a ‘quality assurance’ section any points relevant to interpretation or use.

This approach allows member states across the EU to comply with EU requirements whilst respecting different statistical structures within the member states. In the case of the sex question, National Records of Scotland are currently proposing to ask the same question as the rest of the UK, and on the same basis. ONS will bring these data together to provide the UK output required by Eurostat.

I trust you will find this response helpful.

Yours sincerely



Peter Whitehouse

Director of Statistical Services
National Records of Scotland

ANNEX

1. The Committee would welcome clarification on whether the National Records of Scotland is testing responses to the sex question without accompanying guidance.

If such testing has not already taken place, the Committee requests that such testing is conducted and that the Committee receives an update on the outcome of that testing before the Draft Census Order is laid.

In Autumn 2017, National Records of Scotland (NRS) commissioned cognitive testing on questions being considered for Census 2021. This included questions on sex, gender identity, trans status or history, and sexual orientation. Cognitive testing provides an insight into the mental processes respondents use when answering survey questions, helping to identify problems with question wording and questionnaire design. This approach was taken to provide an understanding of the acceptability, understanding and ability to select an answer.

The first question tested was 'What is your sex?' with a set of binary sex response options (i.e. 'Male' and 'Female') and no guidance was provided. Results showed:

- Whilst general population respondents had mixed understanding of the term 'sex' all were able to provide an answer to the binary sex question during the cognitive interviews. Their understanding of the term sex did not affect the answers they gave in any way.
- Trans respondents also had mixed understandings on what was meant by the term 'sex'. However, for this group understanding of the term did impact on their response given and whether they answered the question at all.

ScotCen Social Research were recently commissioned by NRS to carry out further independent testing of the sex question to see how respondents use and respond to supporting guidance. Fieldwork commenced in mid-September 2019, and involves separate surveys of the general population and the trans and non-binary population.

The testing will report on whether respondents access guidance before answering the sex question, and if so whether this changed their approach to answering the question. These respondents are then also asked to consider whether alternative guidance would change their previous answer. The testing will also report on those who didn't access guidance to answer the sex question, and then test whether guidance (legal sex and self-identification) would change their original answer.

Through this work by ScotCen we will have more evidence around the use of guidance, and the impact of legal sex and self-identification guidance. We expect the results of this work to be available in late December 2019.

2. The Committee also seeks clarification of how participants for any public acceptability testing on responses to the sex question (including with and without guidance) have been sourced (and will be sourced if further testing is to take place).

For the current sex question testing, ScotCen have sent invitation letters to 6500 households across Scotland, selected randomly from the postcode address file (PAF) in Scotland. Each letter includes four access codes to allow up to four individuals in each household to respond to the survey.

The trans population, by best estimates, is small. The professional advice from ScotCen is that the general population survey would not gather enough responses from the trans community to inform an understanding of acceptability and data quality. An alternative recruitment strategy, using a snowballing methodology, has been used to recruit participants from the trans community. Details are set out below.

3. The Committee requests more information about how trans respondents have been sourced to participate in the testing to date and will be sourced in any future testing, including through which organisations.

Since a robust sample frame for trans/non-binary adults does not exist, trans/non-binary respondents are being recruited through a snowball methodology – a common methodology for research with hard-to-reach populations. ScotCen, who are undertaking the research on behalf of NRS, have advertised the research with the trans population by contacting a wide range of organisations and asking them to promote the testing by circulating a poster among their members and/or service users in any of the following ways:

- Their office or other physical locations they use
- Mailing lists
- Support groups
- Newsletters
- Private Facebook groups or forums

Organisations contacted by ScotCen

In addition to Scotland's four gender clinics, ScotCen contacted 55 national and local organisations and groups (listed on Page 3) to alert them to forthcoming testing and to establish if they could assist. At this stage only brief information was provided and the exact nature of the testing or questions being tested was not included. Those who replied deemed themselves suitable to help and agreed to the methods of promotion and were subsequently sent a recruitment poster for circulation. The recruitment poster did not specifically mention which census questions were being explored in the testing.

Inclusion on this list does not equate to participation/agreement to promote the survey rather it indicates that they were sent ScotCen's initial correspondence about the survey. Some of the groups listed are affiliated with each other.

List of trans/non-binary survey contacts	
Action for Trans Health	LGBT Youth Scotland - Dumfries
All about us	LGBT Youth Scotland - Edinburgh
Beyond Gender	LGBT Youth Scotland - Glasgow
Central Scotland Transgender Group	LGBT Youth Scotland - National
Chalmers Gender Identity Clinic	Non-Binary Scotland
Clax LGBT Youth Group	OurStory Scotland
Cumnock Youth Group	Perth TG Group
Different Visions Celebrate (DV8)	Pride Soc - University of Edinburgh's LGBTQ+ Society
Diversitay LGBT Group	Revels of Angus group
Edinburgh Frontrunners	Sandyford Clinic
Edinburgh LGBT Centre	Sandyford Transwomen Support Group
Edinburgh Trans Women	Scottish LGBTI Police Association
EIS LGBT+ Network	Scottish Trans Alliance
Equality Network	Sexual Health Fife
FK Activists Group	Shetland LGBT
Flavours of Fife	Stirling LGBT Group
Glasgow Caledonian LGBT+ group	Stonewall Scotland
Glasgow University LGBT Network (Staff and Postgrads)	Swans of Scotland
Glasgow University LGBTQ+ students association	T Time Edinburgh
Grampian Gender Identity Clinic	T Time Glasgow
Grampian T folk	TG Times
Highland Rainbow Folk	Trans Bare All
Highland Sexual Health Clinic	Trans Masculine Scotland
Leap sports	Trans Media Watch
LGBT Centre for Health and Wellbeing - Edinburgh	Trans Youth D&G
LGBT Centre for Health and Wellbeing - Glasgow	Trans Youth Glasgow over 18s group
LGBT Centre for Health and Wellbeing - National	Y Sort-It Fusion LGBT Youth group
LGBT Dunblane	Youth 2
LGBT Moray	Zone youth lgbt+
LGBT Perth, Central and Dundee Trans	

4. The Committee would also welcome a note of the discussion from the International Census Forum held earlier this month that outlines the approach being taken to the sex question and accompanying guidance in other comparator countries as far as this is known.

The International Census Forum developed out of a recognition that professional statisticians from National Statistical Offices (NSOs) would benefit from the opportunity to candidly share challenges, ideas and solutions with their peers as they worked on delivering the first internet censuses. The first ICF was held February 2003, to meet a general desire to learn from each other and their 2000 census experiences, with the purpose of having technical and candid discussions on census management, methods and operations.

It is a forum designed for the international community to learn from each other, and share experiences of best practice. As such, it enables quick access to expertise on Census issues, builds and maintains effective partnerships, and therefore supports census development internationally by enabling individual countries to implement the best census methods and practices.

To support such discussion the emphasis remains on sharing information. As such, there are no formal record of proceedings. Only action items and the next ICF agenda topics are prepared by the host and distributed.

The following information shows the approach taken in respective last censuses, and accompanying guidance, for comparator countries.

	Australia	Canada	Ireland	New Zealand	USA
Last census	2016	2016	2016	2018	2010
Term 'sex' in the question?	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Definition of sex on the form?	No	No	No	No	No
Guidance available online?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Response options	M/F Non-binary on request	M/F	M/F	M/F	M/F

Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing 2016

The default question in the 2016 Census asked people whether they were male or female, however, special procedures were introduced to enable people to report as neither male nor female on both the paper and online forms. Information on these procedures were available on the online Census form, on the ABS website, and from the Census Inquiry Service.

SEX QUESTION ON DEFAULT ONLINE FORM

2. Is [Person name] male or female?

- If the person wishes to identify as other than male or female, it is possible to use a Census form to do so. Please call the Census Inquiry Service on 1300 214 531 for information on how to identify as other than male or female.

Male

Female

SEX QUESTION ON SPECIAL ONLINE FORM

2. Is [Person name] male, female or other?

[Less Information](#)

If the person wishes to identify as other than male or female, please select 'Other'. The 'please specify' box can be used if the person wishes to provide more information.

Like information on age, sex is important for measuring and understanding many aspects of Australia's population. All personal information provided in your Census form remains strictly confidential to the ABS.

Male

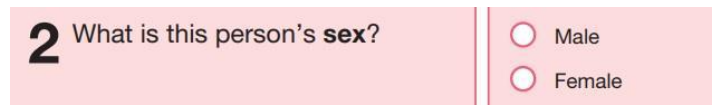
Female

Other (please specify)

Guidance:

The question did not refer to sex or gender so respondents could interpret the 'sex' question as they wished. Respondents completing the census online could request access to a non-binary version of the question with the response options 'Male', 'Female' and 'Other (please specify)'.

Statistics Canada Census of Population 2016:



2 What is this person's **sex**?

Male

Female

Guidance:

For the 2016 Census of Population, transgender, transsexual and intersex Canadians were asked to indicate the sex (male or female) with which they most associated themselves. Respondents who could not select one category, when completing Question 2 on their census questionnaire, had the option of leaving the question blank and indicating in the Comments section the reason(s) for which they had chosen to leave this question unanswered.

Central Statistics Office Ireland Census of Population 2016

Census 2016 offered a paper form only.



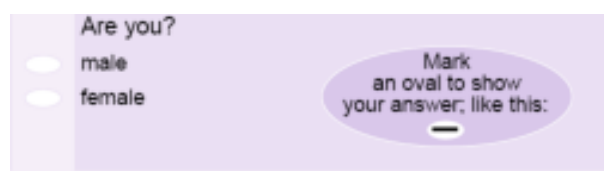
2 Sex

1 Male 2 Female

Guidance:

The sex question in the Irish Census has always been a 'self-declared' one and as such the CSO have not offered guidance to the public on responding to it.

Statistics New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings 2018



Are you?

male

female

Mark an oval to show your answer, like this:

Guidance:

Sex is the distinction between males and females based on the biological differences in sexual characteristics.

In responding to a question on sex, most people are able to classify themselves as either male or female. A person who has undergone sex reassignment is classified to that sex. A person who was of indeterminate sex and who has undergone sex assignment is classified to the assigned sex. Someone who is currently undergoing such procedures and living as the sex that they are taking steps towards is classified as that sex.

United States Census Bureau 2010 Census of Population and Housing

6. What is Person 1's sex? Mark ONE box.

Male Female

Guidance:

Sex

Select one response to indicate this person's biological sex.

How is data on males and females used?

Many federal agencies use data on males and females for funding, implementing, and evaluating their program. Laws promoting equal employment opportunity for women are one example. This information also can be important for analysing social and economic trends.

By law, the Census Bureau can only use your responses to produce statistics. The Census Bureau is required by law to protect your information (Title 13, U.S. Code, Section 9). The Census Bureau is not permitted to publicly release your responses in a way that could identify you or your household. Your answers cannot be used against you by any government agency or court.

5. The Committee notes that the current proposal for the 2021 Census is for guidance to be issued on all questions. The Committee therefore seeks clarification on how many and which questions had accompanying guidance in previous censuses in 2011, 2001 and 1991.

The 2011 Census was the first census in Scotland that could be completed both online and on paper. Supporting question guidance was available online for every 2011 census question. On paper, additional guidance was available to help people answer questions H1 to H5 only which captured information about household members and visitors and the number of household members and visitors.

Census data in 2001 and 1991 was collected through a paper questionnaire. No supporting question guidance was included. However, a helpdesk/contact centre was available to provide support and guidance where respondents required this.

6. The Committee notes the explanation given at the Committee meeting regarding the interaction between the Equality Act 2010 and the Census Order. The Committee recognises the Equality Act 2010 as the cornerstone of UK-wide equalities legislation. The Committee therefore seeks clarification of the National Records of Scotland's understanding of the interaction between the Equality Act and the Census Order.

The written briefing provided to the Committee in advance of the 12 September session, whilst recognising it was focussed on the sex question, as well as the discussion on the day, are both still relevant when considering this matter.

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on all public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations (the Public Sector Equality Duty or PSED). Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) are carried out to assess the impact of applying new or revised policies, practices or services against the needs mentioned above. As you are aware, a draft EQIA was provided to the Committee with the draft Census Order and it continues to be kept under review. That document reflects an assessment of those sorts of impacts which it is anticipated will result from conducting Census 2021 in the manner set out in the draft Census Order.

NRS has considered the relevant protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 during the EQIA work. A number of positive impacts have been identified across characteristics, including the provision of comprehensive, high quality anonymised statistical population estimates, enabling accurate funding allocations to local and national services. Specifically on sex, collecting information on men and women will be valuable to service providers to ensure that appropriate services can be provided which leads to better outcomes for both men and women. The Census already collects information relevant to a number of the protected characteristics. It includes questions relevant to the protected characteristics of sex, age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, religion, and race and is proposing new questions about sexual orientation and trans status/history in the 2021 Census.

Separate and distinct from the direct relevance of the Equality Act 2010 to the Census Order through the PSED as described above, the Equality Act 2010 is also relevant because it drives some (but by no means all) of the user need for outputs from the census. A wide range of public authorities which are themselves subject to the PSED have indicated a need for data from the census which will support them in fulfilling their own duties under the PSED.

NRS has carried out widespread testing to ensure that the questions used in the Census are optimal solutions to meet the diverse respondent and user needs. This includes the use of easy to understand language. The census questions (and the corresponding particulars to be specified in the order) do not use the same language as is used in the Equality Act 2010. For example they do not use the term "race".

The Equality Act 2010 does not, as a matter of law, restrict the questions which can be asked in the census to questions which are framed in terms of the protected characteristics described in that Act. The powers under which the census is to be

conducted are in the Census Act 1920. The Census Act 1920 is not amended by the Equality Act 2010 either expressly or by implication. The particulars which may be prescribed in the Census Order (and on which the questions in the census forms are to be based) must be those which are with respect to the matters set out in the schedule to the 1920 Act. The particulars in schedules 2 and 3 of the draft Order comply with that requirement of the 1920 Act.

NRS also recognises the critical importance of the Equality Act 2010 and agree with the committee that it is the cornerstone of UK-wide equalities legislation. NRS is fully committed to the Act and wish to ensure Scotland's Census 2021 is exemplar in this area. One example of this is the draft EQIA report being developed, which recognises the significant importance of equality matters for the Census and to ensure NRS meets its PSED. However, the NRS commitment to equality matters is across all areas of work.

7. The Committee also seeks clarification on the approach to gathering data on ethnicity in the draft questions provided. In particular, the Committee notes that individual categories within Question 23 appear to use a mix of measures or concepts of ethnicity (e.g. physical appearance, geographic cultural heritage etc.).

Accordingly, it is not clear to the Committee on what basis ethnicity data is being gathered in this question. The Committee seeks clarification on how this question will provide accurate information on ethnic diversity in Scotland that is fit for purpose whilst also ensuring consistency with previous censuses.

A question on ethnic group was first included in the 1991 Census. The information has enabled national and local government, health authorities and others to take account of the special needs of ethnic minority groups. The information is used for resource allocation, to inform policy development and make service planning decisions. It also helps organisations meet and monitor their statutory obligations now arising from the Equalities Act 2010.

The ethnic group response options used in the 1991, 2001 and 2011 Census questions combined concepts of colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins. This measurement in the UK is influenced by the legal framework (the Equality Act 2010), which specifically refers to 'race' as including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins.

One of the main criticisms of the ethnic group classification is its inconsistent use of colour and geography. Following the 2001 Census, in 2002, the then Scottish Government Communities Minister promised to review the way that Scottish surveys classify ethnicity, to ensure that they reflected modern circumstances, met user needs and had broad community support. This followed recommendations by the Race Equality Advisory Forum (REAF) and some community concerns about the classification used in the 2001 Census. In particular, about the different use of colour and geography across the ethnic group categories.

A revised version of the classification with colour labels removed and based on consistent geography (with the exception of an 'Arab' category) was developed and tested in 2006 as part of this [ethnicity classification review prior to the 2011 Census](#), undertaken over the period 2002 to 2010 by the Scottish Government in partnership with the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS), now National Records of Scotland.

Analysis of the test results revealed that removing colour and national identity from the classification has a number of adverse effects on response quality and data quality, in terms of the data need identified for the Census. There were particular issues around the replacement of the 'White' category with 'European'. Given these issues, a decision was taken to re-introduce the terms 'White' and 'Black' into the classification. Removing the colour terms (particularly 'White') alters the data collected such that data is no longer comparable with data collected through previously used classifications, or classifications elsewhere in the UK.

Evaluation of the 2011 census data showed the 2011 question had collected good quality data that met user needs. Development for Census 2021 has not identified a need to change the high level categories used in 2011. The consultation for 2021 highlighted a need for continuity with 2011 and/or earlier censuses, particularly to enable monitoring of equality related policy and service delivery. However, stakeholders did demonstrate the need for some changes, while maintaining consistency across time.

Through consultation, research and question testing for the 2021 Census, NRS continue to hear opposing views on the acceptability of colour terms as ethnicity descriptors. The acceptability of using colour terms (particularly the term "Black") to describe ethnicity is a complex and contentious issue.

8. The Committee also brings the National Records of Scotland's attention to correspondence it has received from members of the Sikh community and encourages the National Records of Scotland to undertake further engagement to ensure the census will capture data that meets the needs of Sikh people.

NRS is grateful for sharing the correspondence and are in the process of arranging further engagement with Sikhs in Scotland to ensure the census will capture data that meets the needs of Sikh people.

9. The Committee also encourages National Records of Scotland to give further consideration to the terminology used in Question 21 in respect of the options that invite individuals to respond with 'Other Christian, please write in' and 'Muslim, please write in'. In this regard, the Committee notes that terms such as 'denomination', or other meaningful terms for non-English speakers, may assist users to understand what is being asked.

NRS is conducting a review with stakeholders including additional text for the write in response for the Muslim category within the religion question. NRS is seeking feedback from stakeholders on two versions of text to prompt respondents who select Muslim to write in a more details response in the text box. The feedback is to confirm

the terminology is acceptable, to ensure respondents can easily answer the question, and the data gathered is of good quality which meets user needs.

10. The Committee seeks clarification on the outcome of that testing [accessibility testing], including the results for people with visual impairment and dyslexia. The Committee also seeks clarification on which stakeholders were consulted in the census development and testing from an accessibility perspective.

Census 2021 is digital first. The purpose of accessibility testing is to understand whether the digital and paper versions of the questionnaire meet the needs of those required to complete them. Accessibility testing has been undertaken on the online platform, with users with disabilities and users of assistive technologies, to understand any issues and how to address them.

The majority of participants found it relatively straight forward to get through entering the internet access code, confirming their address and answering questions about 'who usually lives here'. Respondents were positive about completing online, as it meant they could complete in a format best suited to them, in their own time. There were some usability issues identified. These will affect all users, but are heightened for those with disabilities and users of assistive technologies. Solutions are being developed in an iterative way to address these.

Accessibility testing on the digital platform was undertaken from December 2018 – March 2019, and comprised multiple rounds of usability and accessibility testing. While the testing predominantly focused on the use of the digital components (the online questionnaire and the content on the platform to support the Census), the testing also included understanding what information participants expected or felt they would need in order to complete the census. The learnings from this research build on those gathered in the broader user testing (which included people with neurodiverse reading impairments, specifically diagnosed dyslexic, ADHD, or with general learning disabilities, living independently, and requiring some adaptations for online activity, and people who require supported applications).

Participants in accessibility testing were selected from people with a range of visual, cognitive, physical or auditory disabilities and used assistive technologies. Specifically this included people with:

- Dyslexia;
- Registered blind;
- Visual impairments;
- ADHD/ADD;
- Autism/Asperger syndrome;
- Dyslexia/Dyscalculia/Dyspraxia;
- Learning disability/Down syndrome;
- Reduced motor skills;
- Deaf/Hard of hearing and/or BSL (English as a second language).

In developing a Census which is inclusive and easy for all to respond to, NRS have consulted a wide range of stakeholders around census development and testing to ensure the census is as easy as possible for all people in Scotland to complete.

The organisations consulted up to this point are:

- Action on Hearing Loss
- ALLIANCE (Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland), National Coordinator for the SG See Hear Strategy
- Alzheimer's Scotland
- British Deaf Association Scotland
- Capability Scotland
- Care Inspectorate
- Carers Scotland
- Carers Trust Scotland
- CLD Standards Council
- Deaf Action
- Deaf Scotland
- Deafblind Scotland
- Disability Information Scotland
- Down's Syndrome Scotland
- Dyslexia Scotland
- EKTA Elderly Care Forum
- Enable Scotland
- Glasgow Association for Mental Health
- Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland
- Hearing Link
- Inclusion Scotland
- Literature Alliance Scotland (LAS)
- NHS Education for Scotland (NES)
- RNIB Scotland
- Royal College of Speech and Therapy (RCSLT) Scotland
- Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)
- Scotland Versus Arthritis
- Scottish Autism
- Scottish Commission for Learning Disability
- Scottish Council on Deafness
- Scottish Government - BSL Frankie McLean
- Scottish Government, Directorate for Health and Social Care
- Scottish Learning Disabilities Observatory
- Sense Scotland
- SG Assisted Communications Policy Manager
- Skills Development Scotland
- The National Autistic Society Scotland
- Voluntary Health Scotland

11. The Committee also notes in respect of Question 18 that ‘addiction’ is listed in the accompanying guidance as an example of a mental health condition. The Committee seeks clarification of what testing or consultation the National Records of Scotland has undertaken, or will undertake, to understand how individuals are most likely to classify ‘addiction’ in response to Question 18.

The development of the text for the online pop-up prompts for this question involved analysis of responses in 2011 to determine the range and frequency of respondents answers.

From this work an initial draft list was created featuring terms which are commonly used by the general public and written in a way familiar to them; this approach ensures that the question is easy to answer.

However, some of the terms used in 2011 might be outdated, and sometimes stigmatising. Thus, further development involved feedback from relevant stakeholders, such as the Scottish Government’s (SG) Mental Health Directorate, including the Adult Mental Health Division, Children and Young People’s Mental Health Division, Strategy & Delivery for Dementia, Autism and Learning Disability, as well as a representative from Education Analytical Services in the SG Learning Directorate.

Some comments suggested specifying the addition of examples such as ‘Substance misuse – alcohol’ and ‘Substance misuse – illicit drugs’. This feedback suggested that the conditions related to addiction should be provided in the list of examples for mental health category. Based on this feedback and taking into account respondent burden, a decision was made to keep addiction as an example in the guidance, but as ‘Addiction’ to reduce the amount of text presented on the accompanying guidance page.

Other stakeholders included Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) who confirmed that addictions are co-morbid with mental health conditions where someone has a mental health condition alongside an addiction, or where alcohol or substance abuse is used as a coping method. The suggestion followed that the placement of addiction is appropriate under mental health conditions.

In 2017, question testing was undertaken on all questions under development. The pop-up help prompts of ‘More information’ under each health condition category presented on the online questionnaire, were included the quantitative testing. Testing demonstrated that this function improves respondent understanding of the question response options. While the conditions included in the additional guidance was not specifically questioned, no respondents provided any feedback on the conditions included.

Further, following the Committee’s enquiry, the SG Mental Health Directorate Principal Medical Officer confirmed that addiction should be included as an example under the mental health conditions category. This is because addiction is a major comorbidity with other mental disorders that has significant health and social impact.

12. The Committee also notes the timetable for completing the public acceptability testing (i.e. mid to end December 2019) and the laying of the draft Census Order (i.e. early January 2020) provided by the National Records of Scotland. The Committee seeks assurances from the National Records of Scotland that the Committee will be given the opportunity to consider the results of the testing at a meeting before the draft Census Order is laid.

NRS can confirm that the Committee will be given the opportunity to consider the results of the testing at a meeting before the draft Census Order is laid.

13. Letter of 24 September - the Committee wrote to the National Records of Scotland seeking clarification of its understanding of the interaction between the Equality Act 2010 and the Census Order in a letter dated 18 September 2019. A majority of the Committee has agreed to seek additional clarification from the National Records of Scotland on this issue with specific reference to the National Records of Scotland's understanding of the interaction between the proposed response options for Question 8 in the draft Census Order and the protected characteristic of sexual orientation in the Equality Act 2010.

The response to item 6 above provides NRS views on the interaction between the Census and the Equality Act 2010, which includes for the sexual orientation question. The following information explains more on the coding of data, including the use of predictive text.

Predictive text is one of a number of functional elements within the online collection tool employed to meet these principles. Predictive text is primarily used to:

- i. improve the respondent experience – by making it easier and quicker to complete the census by selecting from a list as opposed to typing the whole answer out;
- ii. improve data quality – as items on the list are recognised and can be easily matched to a code, rather than having to match free-text responses to a coding index, which can introduce error;
- iii. improve efficiencies in coding and processing the data, so allowing the production of outputs in a timely manner. Manually matching free-text to a coding index is extremely time consuming and expensive.

Data is collected for all people in Scotland. Therefore questions, and the responses, are formatted in a way that allows all respondents to answer easily, in a way that collects good quality data that meets identified user needs.

Across a number of questions, write in response options allow the Census to gather significantly more detailed data, in an efficient way, to meet a wide range of user needs.

All of the data collected through the Census questionnaire must be converted into numeric values for processing purposes – this is termed 'coding'. To enable coding,

indexes are used to match text responses to a numeric value; these include variations in text which would result in a match to the same coded value.

Turning written text into coded values is a very time consuming and costly process. Working to design census systems which minimise the manual intervention is crucial to meeting the Census objectives. Whilst some data on paper forms can be coded using intelligent optical character recognition, there is still a need for manual intervention. Therefore we are working across the online system and the paper capture system to try and automate as much of this as possible.

The digital platform allows much of this coding to be applied at the point of data entry. The most efficient way of doing this is using type ahead lists to guide people in their choice. In many instances, use of predictive text is standard across the public and private sector; for example applications for official documents such as passports and drivers licences; in private sector such as insurance applications, and in shopping and hospitality websites.

Use of predictive text minimises errors such as spelling mistakes and abbreviations, which means clean codeable data is collected. For example, if someone wishes to enter free text into the ethnic group question, as they type we will start to offer a list of suggestions, based on their text entry (these will be able to be matched back to our coding index). For those who see their response on the list, a single click by the user selects the correct response, so improving the respondent experience. In this example, the respondent does not have to select from the list but if they do, the data is then able to be coded at the point of data entry, so minimising the need to manually code the response.

The coding indexes for 2011 were the basis for the current predictive text lists to be used within the online collection instrument (OCI), which are currently being used in the Census rehearsal. The vast majority of write-in responses are expected to be contained within these. As the sexual orientation question is new for 2021, stakeholder consultation was undertaken to construct the predictive text lists for use within OCI for the 2021 Census (and 2019 rehearsal).

Work was undertaken to ensure that all predictive text lists only used non-offensive language, did not include duplicates, could be understood by the general public, and were consistent with guidance which would be provided when answering questions.

Although there are predictive text lists being used for the rehearsal in 2019, these will be updated and refreshed for the Census in 2021. This will incorporate findings and learnings from the rehearsal.

As part of the rehearsal evaluation activity, there will be a piece of work to specifically look at the use of predictive text lists. This will consider aspects such as: how extensively they were used (vs free text); if they caused problems for anyone who couldn't find something suitable from the list; data quality implications, including whether predictive text changes the way people respond; and ease of use.

As requested, the list below shows the predictive text list developed for the sexual orientation question:

- Androphilic
- Androsexual
- Asexual
- Bicurious
- Bisexual
- Demiromantic
- Demisexual
- Fluid
- Gay
- Gynephilic
- Gynesexual
- Homosexual
- Heterosexual
- Lesbian
- Pansexual
- Polysexual
- Queer
- Questioning
- Skoliosexual
- Straight
- Unsure