

# **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE**

Monday 3 October 2005

Session 2

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## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE**

**14<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2005, Session 2**

### **CONVENER**

\*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

### **DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD)

### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP)

\*Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab)

Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)

\*Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

\*John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)

Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP)

### **COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES**

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con)

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab)

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

Carolyn Leckie (Central Scotland) (SSP)

\*attended

### **THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:**

Duncan Macniven (Registrar General for Scotland)

Ian Máté (General Register Office for Scotland)

### **CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Steve Farrell

### **SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK**

Zoé Tough

### **ASSISTANT CLERK**

Roy McMahon

### **LOCATION**

Committee Room 2



## Scottish Parliament

### Equal Opportunities Committee

*Monday 3 October 2005*

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 10:16*]

#### Item in Private

**The Convener (Cathy Peattie):** Good morning and welcome to the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting in 2005 of the Equal Opportunities Committee. I have received apologies from Marilyn Livingstone, Elaine Smith and Sandra White.

Do members agree to take item 4 in private, as it deals with a draft report that we have not yet agreed?

**Members indicated agreement.**

#### Reporter

10:16

**The Convener:** Item 2 is on committee reporters. Members will be aware that, since Shiona Baird left the committee, we have not had a reporter on religion and belief. I am pleased to say that Jamie McGrigor has volunteered to take on that role. Are members content that Jamie McGrigor should take on the role of reporter on religion and belief?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** That is a great honour.

## Census 2011

10:17

**The Convener:** Item 3 is on the 2011 census. I welcome Duncan Macniven and Ian Máté from the General Register Office for Scotland. I invite them to make a few opening remarks.

**Duncan Macniven (Registrar General for Scotland):** As registrar general, I deal with matters demographic and with the census taking. Ian Máté is in charge of the data collection side of the preparations for the 2011 census. No decision has been taken yet to run the census in that year but, in order to keep that option open, we need to make advance preparations; it is not an exercise that can be cranked up in a morning.

Census taking is a devolved matter, so the eventual decisions on the nature of the 2011 census will be made in this building. Those decisions will not need to be made for some time—perhaps not until 2010—so we are very much in the work-up period, during which we are keen to gather people's views on what the census should contain and how it should be carried out. We are in consultation mode at the moment but, eventually, we will have to put on our project management hat and ensure that decisions are made, about the content of the census and how to run it, in time to enable us to do that smoothly. Difficult decisions might have to be made at that point, but we are not yet at that point; we are in the honeymoon period.

We are trying to ensure that we are properly in touch with users of the census—because, obviously, the census is a big exercise with a body of users for whom the data are hugely important—special interest groups and the community in general. One of the problems that we face is that people are becoming progressively less willing to answer surveys, even the census. Although the census has statutory backing and an importance to society that people generally understand, we still face difficulties with it. As a countermeasure, we are ensuring that the census is seen by the whole community as a relevant exercise that has something in it for them. We want them to see why we are asking the questions.

It is against that background that we very much welcome the committee's help as we build up to the first main preparation for the census, which is a test in 2006 in the three areas that we mention in our written submission.

**The Convener:** You have answered my first question, which was about where you are in the process. Are you confident that you will be able to meet the timescales for the preparation work that needs to be done?

**Duncan Macniven:** Yes. We have undertaken the task every 10 years since at least 1861, so we are quite used to it. We will stand on the shoulders of the 2001 census, as we have learned a lot of lessons from that. The 2001 census went fine, but one can learn lessons from any project. One of those lessons is that there are some things that we need to start earlier, such as public consultation and engagement with the Parliament—you were not here to engage with in 1995, when we were at the same stage in the run-up to the 2001 census.

**The Convener:** Of course. I am interested in exploring some of the areas around involving people and getting better participation. You stress the fact that, these days, people are reluctant to be consulted. Can you explore some of the methods that are being used to encourage people and communities to participate?

**Duncan Macniven:** We are keen to take as many steps of that kind as we can and take what opportunities come to us, although we can organise some things ourselves. We have organised a pukka consultation in the approved Scottish Executive fashion and have received quite a lot of responses to it—we were not disappointed with that. However, we are also taking the opportunity to make contact with people who contacted us as a result of that consultation. For example, we are setting up bilateral contacts with the community of travelling people to pursue the issues that are important to them. There is a lot of that bilateral contact.

Our main problem lies especially with men in the 18-to-30 age group, who tend to be loth to answer the census. We are conscious that we missed quite a chunk of them in the 2001 census. We have, therefore, paid particular attention to schools and, in contact with Learning and Teaching Scotland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education, we have published a schools pack that teachers can use in the geography and modern studies bit of the five-to-14 curriculum. We want to ensure that the people who will take part in the 2011 census when they are grown up will have been exposed to the usefulness of the data. That may be a naive hope, but it is the kind of initiative that we are pursuing.

We have also taken an opportunity that was offered by Glasgow City Council to run a competition in a couple of schools in Glasgow in the area where we will run the test census in the spring. We asked pupils to suggest questions that we might ask in the census. As I mention in our written submission, they came up with two interesting questions. We have included those in the test census, so the pupils can say, "We were there. It matters to us. It's got our name in it."

**The Convener:** It is important that the people who are involved in consultation feel that someone is listening to them. The work that you are doing in schools is interesting and important. What kind of reception have you had from teachers and people in schools, who might see such things as another burden or another job to do? Have they been keen to take the work on in modern studies departments, for example?

**Duncan Macniven:** Ian Máté has been in touch with the school community, so he can answer the question better.

**Ian Máté (General Register Office for Scotland):** The material was written by teachers, because I did not feel that I could make it relevant, as I am not a teacher. So far, I have talked to the three enthusiastic schoolteachers and that is it. I have asked the adviser for modern studies and geography if I can meet before Christmas all the teachers in Glasgow who are using the material so that I can find out how they view it and whether it is useful.

**The Convener:** Do you envisage the material being rolled out to other parts of Scotland? Clearly, it is about the census, but we are in a climate in which there are many consultations and, as has been stressed, youngsters are reluctant to participate in them. Will there be something in the curriculum to continue the work?

**Ian Máté:** The material that Glasgow City Council kindly produced for us is relevant to the whole of Scotland; it does not focus on Glasgow alone. I am worried that the material for the initiative will just sit on a shelf in schools when we have paid the £16,000 or whatever for it. We might have to go to teacher conferences to try to push the use of the material. In December, I will try to find out from the teachers how much resource we need to roll out the initiative throughout Scotland. Learning and Teaching Scotland has said that it is willing to roll it out.

**The Convener:** That is why I asked the question. Good material often lies on a shelf because there are not enough resources to back it up.

**Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD):** Do you work with local authorities to tap into the teacher training days or continuing professional development?

**Duncan Macniven:** That is the kind of work that we hope to do now that we have the teachers pack, which was published last month. As Ian Máté said, we have good links with Learning and Teaching Scotland and with HMIE.

**John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP):** The respondents to the autumn 2004 census consultation highlighted the fact that certain hard-

to-reach groups may not have been included in the 2001 census, particularly communities for whom English is not the first language. You have already pre-empted and answered my second question, which was about hard-to-reach younger people, but what about people in the first category?

**Duncan Macniven:** The issue of people whose first language is not English has always been a concern for us and we have always had strategies for dealing with it. Those strategies have been fairly successful, but they could be improved, which is another lesson from 2001 that we will apply. As we said in our paper, we are keen to establish as many links as possible with minority ethnic groups throughout Scotland to ensure that we ask the right questions in the right way and with the right supporting material. That is relatively easy, because those groups are, or appear to be, well organised. It is less difficult than working with the English-speaking 18-to-30 age group that I mentioned, which is not homogeneous or well organised at all. In West Dunbartonshire, which is one of our test areas, we have good contacts with groups of young mothers. Young mothers are not such a difficult group for us as young men are, but that is the kind of direct contact that we try to build up. The good liaison that we have with local authorities in the areas where we propose to carry out the census test next year will be helpful.

**John Swinburne:** The Royal National Institute of the Blind and Deafblind Scotland have criticised the 2001 census for its inaccessibility. For example, Deafblind Scotland suggests that guide communicators could be provided to assist people. What measures does your organisation plan to take to make the 2011 census more accessible? Are there any plans to test the measures in 2006?

10:30

**Duncan Macniven:** That is another matter that Ian Máté has studied.

**Ian Máté:** First, in a general sense, I am trying to change the role of enumerators so that they can fill in the form on the doorstep. The enumerator presence will be slightly enhanced. Going down the technological route removes that context.

Secondly, we have had two meetings with the Disability Rights Commission and people from RNIB Scotland, Deafblind Scotland and other groups have come to the GROS for all-day conferences to discuss the enumeration methodology. With the RNIB, I have proposed a three-month project to employ a person who needs work experience to quality assure and promote the methods that we need to use in the census, which we hope to test in 2006, to try to

ensure that we have all the techniques and processes in place.

**John Swinburne:** Are you quite confident that you are going down the right road for the next census to improve on the previous census for such inaccessible groups?

**Ian Máté:** I am not quite confident; I am still trying to find out how to achieve that. I cannot claim to be an expert yet but, if we have the RNIB on board, if the DRC provides awareness training in the run-up to the census test and if all the methods are tested in 2006, we will be some way down that route. The main problem that may still remain is encouraging people to open doors when people are more wary of opening doors. We certainly have a problem with older people and we imputed many more older people than middle-aged people, largely because older people are difficult to contact, as they will not open doors.

**Duncan Macniven:** I will explain the reference to imputation. We reckon that 96 per cent of the population supplied us with a census form. Rather than saying, "Och well, here's 96 per cent," we applied statistical techniques to fill in the remaining 4 per cent, so we have data that cover 100 per cent of the Scottish population. We had to impute—to assign values to—the returns that we did not receive in the proper fashion. Everything that we do is designed to reduce the amount of imputation that we must undertake.

**John Swinburne:** Respondents to the autumn 2004 consultation also suggest that advertising the census could improve in 2011 to say how census information is used and how it can help communities. Such advertising might make the census more relevant and improve response rates from hard-to-reach communities. What plans does the GROS have to do that?

**Duncan Macniven:** We are at quite an early stage to be thinking about such advertising, particularly if it means paid advertising. On formal advertising, Ian Máté has established contacts with the advertising world—we can use the Scottish Executive contract for that. We have secured the advice that will eventually lead to a good solution, but it is too early to say what that solution will be.

It is not entirely or even mainly such paid advertising—which the word "advertising" conjures up for me—that is important to us. The publicity that we have talked about this morning is more important for the hard-to-reach groups. If they do not complete their census forms, they are not likely avidly to read the excellent publicity that we insert in the daily newspapers. The level is more difficult than that. In 2001, our publicity campaign was very good. We will not, realistically, be able to improve a lot on the paid publicity. I feel that it is

the unpaid publicity and liaison that will bring us more returns, although, as I said, it is early days.

**John Swinburne:** On unpaid publicity, do you have any promises of access to the BBC? If information is broadcast on television, the message gets across to the bulk of the community—apart from the blind people who obviously cannot see it. Is co-operation from the BBC, for example, guaranteed?

**Duncan Macniven:** I would be very surprised if we did not get co-operation. The census has traditionally had good support from the BBC and the rest of the media. I was not in post in 2001, but my predecessor and our opposite number south of the border had meetings with the editors, as did ministers. There is good support for the census and I would not criticise it. Even at this stage, we have found that the media have a helpful attitude on the census test. The census interests people; it has a sort of magic and an aura about it.

**Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I like the idea of the census having a sort of magic and an aura.

Will you expand on your comments on Gypsy Travellers? Respondents highlighted that engagement with the Gypsy Traveller community could be improved. They cited a lack of understanding of the relevance of the census and literacy issues as being major barriers to the participation of Gypsy Travellers. In the context of literacy issues, advertisements in newspapers are not helpful in the slightest. That must be taken into account. What plans does the GROS have to increase awareness and participation among the Gypsy Traveller community?

**Duncan Macniven:** I very much agree that that community is one to which we must pay special attention. That is not a new issue for the 2011 census, as that group has traditionally presented difficulties to us and our predecessors. Ian Máté has been in direct contact with the community, so he is perhaps better placed than I am to answer the question.

**Ian Máté:** About 200 people affirmed in 2001 that they were Gypsy Travellers or Romanies, so we obviously did not identify the community. We may have had responses from many more Gypsy Travellers or Romanies in 2001, but I doubt that we did. They are difficult to enumerate.

We held a meeting at the GROS to which we invited as many Gypsy Traveller representatives as possible. We provided lunch and paid expenses. Three Gypsy Travellers and two representatives of Gypsy Traveller organisations came to the meeting. We have said that we will try to have six-monthly meetings with them. For our test, we have chosen areas around Fort William and in West Dunbartonshire where there are

Gypsy Traveller encampments. Through community planning partnerships we will try, with the co-operation of the Gypsy Travellers, to enumerate the formal Gypsy Traveller sites.

We have added a Gypsy Traveller/Romany tick box to the ethnic question—at least, we have in the version that I currently use, although we are waiting for the race equality scheme implementation group's findings. We have broken down the category of caravans into mobile and static caravans at the request of the Gypsy Travellers. They also requested a literacy question, because of the problem that they face with being bullied out of schools and so not always being very literate. We have always fought against having a literacy question, because that raises the conundrum that people who are illiterate cannot answer the question in the first place. However, I am not worried about that issue in this context, because someone else will fill in the form.

We have made those changes to try to meet the requests of the Gypsy Travellers. My branch went to a Gypsy Traveller training awareness day in Maryhill to try to create more links. The next step, now that we have appointed our regional census managers, is to get them to meet the Gypsy Traveller representatives. There are difficulties in all that, because it is not yet clear to me that the Gypsy Travellers want to be recognised—some of them do and some of them do not. We will have continuing problems enumerating Gypsy Travellers, because they are not yet sure that they want to be identified as an ethnic group.

**Marlyn Glen:** For our other work, it is important that we have a realistic census return. It would be interesting for us to consider the issue, to see how it works. I am also interested in the fact that you are having meetings around the country. The committee is always concerned that, when we meet representatives of any community, we may be meeting self-appointed gatekeepers and hearing only their views, rather than the views of the rest of the community. Are you aware of that problem?

**Duncan Macniven:** We are very conscious of it with a couple of the groups that we have mentioned. We will read with interest the Gypsy Traveller report that the committee is about to publish. Although we are Edinburgh based, we are not Edinburgh fixated. Crofters are another community that we have not discussed. We need to be sure that we have caught the essence of the crofting community, so we will run a focus group on it in Stornoway.

**Marlyn Glen:** The respondents also suggested that the recruitment of enumerators from ethnic minority communities, such as the Gypsy Traveller community, would encourage participation from



those communities. What are your views on that suggestion?

**Ian Máté:** We have discussed the suggestion with the community. Whenever we go through the detail of it, some people indicate that they would like to be enumerated by a trusted outsider, some indicate that they would like to be enumerated by someone in the encampment—we are happy to employ someone to do that—and some indicate that they would like to be treated like everyone else and to be enumerated by a census enumerator. Those are the kinds of issues that we must work through in the census test, which is not compulsory, to see how we will operate. I am afraid that I do not yet know how we will proceed.

**Marlyn Glen:** It is a difficult question.

**Mr McGrigor:** The committee notes that a question on income will be included in the 2006 test. Can you update the committee on the background to that? Why do respondents find it so controversial?

**Duncan Macniven:** Many of our users would like to have better information on income. That is the key to allowing Government to focus on areas of particular difficulty across the policy spectrum. We would dearly like to include a question on income in the census. That is not a new thought. We included a question on income in the 1997 test that was used in the run-up to the 2001 census. We drew back from including such a question in the 2001 census, because the test results suggested that it would diminish the rate of return. As I have explained, that is important to us, so to include a question on income would have been to throw the baby out with the bath water.

You asked why people think that the issue is sensitive. It is just a Scottish or United Kingdom characteristic for people to think, "My income is of no concern to you, thank you very much." I do not know why people apply that thought so much to income, when one could say almost the same thing about everything else that we ask about in the census. People could say, "Why are you asking me what religion I belong to? That is none of your business." I do not think that there is a difference in kind with the income question, although there may be a difference in degree. We would like to come up with a question that does not harm the response rate. We are looking for one through the test.

Because the issue is so important, we are effectively running two tests. We are running 50 per cent of forms with an income question and 50 per cent without one, so that we can see what effect including such a question has on response rates. A drop in the response rate is what we fear and is what puts us off having an income question.

However, our users are perfectly clear that they want it and we would love to deliver it.

10:45

**Mr McGrigor:** If you included an income question, would it be split into different boxes that people would tick or would it ask them directly for a figure?

**Duncan Macniven:** It would consist of tick boxes with bands of income.

**John Swinburne:** It might help members of my generation, many of whom live below the poverty line, if you indicated what the current poverty line was and simply asked people to indicate whether they were above or below that line. Something simple like that would enable people to tick a box without declaring how poor they were, living on a pension in 2011.

**Duncan Macniven:** That is an interesting idea that we can reflect on. The way our tick boxes are organised comes quite close to that, but it also gets information about the degree to which people are above the poverty line, which would also be desirable. However, if our test suggests that we cannot collect income information in the way that we would like to, we could fall back on the method that you suggest, which focuses on an important aspect of the issue.

**Ian Máté:** It would be interesting simply to have a bar and ask people to indicate whether they were above or below it. The issue is a wee bit difficult, because we have a household income question, which means that the poverty level depends on the number of people in the household as well as on the income level.

**Mr McGrigor:** The 2006 test form will have a question asking whether respondents have experienced discrimination in the past week. What is the background to that question and what will the results be used for?

**Ian Máté:** The 2001 census had an ethnicity question that mixed geography and colour and was generally unwelcome. However, people are discriminated against on the ground of colour. We felt that, if the ethnic question reflected geography, we should have a question alongside it that would pick up discrimination on the ground of colour. That was the starting point. Once we started discussing the issue, we found out that a lot of people welcomed the question. For instance, Age Concern wanted a question on discrimination on the ground of age and the Disability Rights Commission wanted a question on discrimination on the ground of disability. Each organisation wanted some way of determining the level of discrimination against the people whom they represent.

We want to ask questions that the public will find interesting because we think that that is one of the ways in which we will increase participation in the census test and the census. The question that you ask about has been viewed positively by the focus groups that have seen it so far, such as the young mothers of West Dunbartonshire, the Fife Arabic Society and various groups of civil servants. We found that people who have been discriminated against on all sorts of grounds want that to be recorded.

**Mr McGrigor:** How would the question be worded? Would you be asking about any form of discrimination?

**Ian Máté:** We ask about all of the forms of discrimination that have been legislated against or which will have been legislated against by 2011. There are 10 tick boxes, but there ought to be another one that says "None". We ask about: accent; colour; ethnicity; language; religion, faith or belief; sexual orientation; age; disability; gender; and nationality. We think that it will be quite interesting to use the ethnicity question to determine how groups feel that they are discriminated against. That will give us an idea of the quality of life that they have in Scotland as well as what ethnic group they belong to.

**Marlyn Glen:** That is a huge improvement.

I notice that one of the boxes is for gender, which is fine, but the second question is not, "What is your gender?" but, "What is your sex?" Why are different words used?

**Duncan Macniven:** For question 2, the basic demographic question, I think that we have always used "sex"—

**Marlyn Glen:** In the past.

**Duncan Macniven:** And it has worked. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

**Marlyn Glen:** But you use "gender" in question 16.

**Duncan Macniven:** We deliberately use "gender" in question 16 because it conjures up a different image. It is asking not, "What sex are you?" but, "Are you being discriminated against on the ground of your gender?" It is, perhaps, a subtle difference.

**Marlyn Glen:** Very subtle.

**Duncan Macniven:** We would be happy to have another look at that.

**Marlyn Glen:** Good.

**Duncan Macniven:** I suspect that the honest answer is that question 16 has evolved—

**Marlyn Glen:** And question 2 has not.

**Duncan Macniven:** It has evolved to a point that question 2 has not.

**Marlyn Glen:** Exactly.

**Duncan Macniven:** Nonetheless, question 2 has always worked. We do not have a problem with the way in which people answer question 2, which suggests that people do not have a problem with the way in which question 2 has been asked.

**Marlyn Glen:** I see.

**Duncan Macniven:** We shall look at it again.

**The Convener:** We would be grateful if you could.

**Nora Radcliffe:** My first question follows on neatly from that. The Equality Network's consultation revealed that some respondents thought that a question on gender identity should be included. Do you think that that is feasible? Do you have any reservations? In view of the fact that the male/female question has always been effective, might that be compromised by introducing a question on gender identity?

**Ian Máté:** To give a personal point of view, the answer is yes, but we obviously have to test my personal points of view. If we have something else in there, people may give a frivolous answer, so we always have to be a bit wary of that. For instance, we had 14,000 Jedis in 2001. If they were given the opportunity to write things in, people took that opportunity.

**Duncan Macniven:** There were also Terry's old geezers and gals, among which I hope none of you numbers yourself. The problem of frivolous responses is always at the back of our mind.

**Nora Radcliffe:** So you do not really see a way of introducing that question?

**Duncan Macniven:** It is too early to say.

**Nora Radcliffe:** Are you testing it?

**Ian Máté:** No. We were testing a sexual orientation question, but that is as far as we went. That is obviously different from gender and sex, but we are not testing such a question.

**Nora Radcliffe:** I notice that the sexual orientation question was included in the consultation in the summer but that it is not in the draft 2006 test. Are you testing it in some other way? Was there a reason for missing it out of the 2006 test?

**Ian Máté:** My personal opinion was that such a question would affect coverage. In the 2006 census test, we are already taking a risk with coverage to test the income question, which, from the point of view of our data users, is much more important. We decided not to include the sexual orientation question in the 2006 census test, but

Richard Morrison, who is sitting behind me, has done a 4,000-household survey with a fairly bland set of census questions. He added the sexual orientation question to 50 per cent of them to test it. We are keying in the data now; we have had a 28 per cent response rate, and there is no difference between the sexual orientation returns and the non-sexual orientation returns. We are now looking at the accuracy of the returns, and we also asked people for their opinions on all the questions to see what they thought about that question.

That is the state of play at the moment. Basically, we are preparing the ground so that, if the Scottish Parliament wanted to include a sexual orientation question in 2010 or 2011, we would have the evidence one way or the other to support, or not to support, the inclusion of such a question. We would also have a tested question, so that we could put one in.

**Nora Radcliffe:** Your survey indicates that the inclusion of such a question would probably not have a detrimental effect. Is it now too late to include it in the 2006 test, or do you not want to have too many test questions in the test?

**Ian Máté:** We are running out of space on the 2006 census test questionnaire. We are still waiting for information from the racial equality scheme implementation group. We have left a space for the group, but it appears that it is going to ask us to run two questions.

I still do not know whether there really is a threat to coverage—I have to worry about that, as someone who wants the results of the census test to indicate clearly whether or not to have an income question.

**Nora Radcliffe:** Do I recall correctly that you will have another census test in 2008? There might be an opportunity to fly that one again, as it were, at that point.

**Ian Máté:** That is right. We would have preferred to have flown it in 2008 if we had felt that that was the way that the wind was blowing.

**Nora Radcliffe:** So if you thought that a sexual orientation question was coming in for 2011, you would want to do the test then.

**Ian Máté:** Yes.

**Nora Radcliffe:** Another thing that the Equality Network consultation threw up was the suggestion that an online form could encourage people to respond, because they might feel that that was more private. What consideration have you given to that?

**Duncan Macniven:** We have been thinking hard about online returns, and we have been making some international comparisons. On one level,

and from one point of view, the technology gives us a really good, heaven-sent opportunity that should offer a way of capturing men aged between 18 and 30 in particular. If using an online form achieved that, we would be very keen for that to happen. Based on our international contacts, we are a little sceptical about it at the moment, particularly because the cost of adding on that option would be significant. We are currently not including online returns in our 2006 test. However, our opposite numbers south of the border, who perhaps have deeper pockets than we do, are planning to include them. We will look very carefully at what that does for the return rate there. If it produces a decent increase in the return rate, we will be keen to adopt it.

We are also considering—and will be able to consider over the decade—how other countries that are ahead of us in the census cycle fare with their questions. I have in mind Canada, whose population is not dissimilar to ours. The short answer is that we are keeping the option open.

I wish to add to a response that Ian Máté gave earlier. This might be an obvious point, in which case I am sorry to labour it, but I stress that the space on the census form presents us with a great dilemma. On one level, we might say, "It's liberty hall. Let's include as many questions as people want." However, such an approach would carry with it the danger of a falling response rate. There is a limit to the number of questions or to the size of form that we can expect people to complete patiently. We must constantly be aware of the need to strike a balance. There is a potential source of conflict there with the communities that we have been talking about, each of which feels that its needs are sufficiently important to warrant several inches in the census form.

**Nora Radcliffe:** The point is well made. The last time we discussed the matter, we very much took that on board in considering whether to ask for the question that, in the end, you included. We were conscious of the law of diminishing returns: the more we put in, the less we get back—roughly speaking.

I return to the completion of the form. You mentioned your hope that enumerators would be allowed to help people to fill in the form. Do you think that the money that might be spent on online forms could be spent more effectively on getting more enumerators and giving them more time for personal contacts?

**Ian Máté:** I absolutely agree, although that is another personal view. I personally do not see very much benefit in web-based completion. Canada, New Zealand and Australia seem to be spending about \$10 million on web-based completion, the completion rates for which are about 10 per cent. I do not think that people who

would not complete a paper-based census would complete a web-based census. Web-based completion does not cover underenumeration in that sense. Those who do not fill in the census form do not think to themselves, "Oh, goodie, now we can comply by filling it in on the web." They take a different view.

11:00

**Nora Radcliffe:** This is quite a political question, because it is a matter of resources. I am dredging up my personal memories now. Was there more in the way of personal contact when the forms were collected during the 1991 census than happened during the 2001 census, or is that a misperception on my part?

**Ian Máté:** It is not really a misperception. In 1991, the enumerators dealt on average with 250 to 350 households; in 2001, they dealt with 350 to 400 households. The methodology might have been the same, but we had fewer enumerators. Because we used post-back forms, the enumerators did not have to return to so many households. Therefore, we increased the number of households that each enumerator could deal with.

**Nora Radcliffe:** That is helpful, and it is something that we might want to bear in mind regarding the resources that are allocated to the census.

The question on health in the 2006 census test has changed a great deal from the question that was on the 2001 census form. Can you tell us something about the reasons for the change and how it will improve results?

**Ian Máté:** Question 6 of the 2006 census test is a very important health question:

"Over the last twelve months would you say your health has on the whole been: Good? Fairly good? Not good?"

The question seems to be vital to the national health service—we know that from talking to researchers in the NHS. It is a very good predictor of general practitioner and hospital use in an area. However, the public does not like it. It is almost like the question, "Hello. How are you?" They do not see the purpose of it; however, I keep getting reassured that it is a very valuable question.

When we talked to the Disability Rights Commission and various other organisations that represent disabled people, we wanted to find questions that were a wee bit more incisive and that picked up more on people's conditions and what those conditions prevented them from doing. The questions are from the Irish census, and they follow the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe—UNECE—recommendations. We wanted to test them, and we have been in close

contact with the Disability Rights Commission to get its approval. The commission is not completely happy with the two extra questions that we are testing, but it says that they are an improvement.

It is very difficult to get good, useful information. The information is not useful for the individual, but it is useful for planning in the NHS and so on.

**Marlyn Glen:** I want to compare the language used in question 7 with that used in question 18. Question 7 asks:

"Do you have any of the following conditions lasting 12 months or more?"

Among the conditions that it asks about is

"a psychological or emotional condition".

That is fair enough.

Question 18, which is for carers, asks:

"Do you look after, or give any help or support to family members, friends, neighbours or others because of: long term physical or mental ill-health?"

Mental ill health is not mentioned in question 7. I recognise that it is covered, but the language is different. Is there a reason for that?

**Ian Máté:** Question 18 was in the 2001 census, and we have adapted it slightly to have one more tick box and to break down the numbers of hours a week of caring. The other question is entirely new.

**Marlyn Glen:** They do not match up, and from a statistical point of view one would want the questions to match up.

**Ian Máté:** I worked with that question after it was used by enumerators in Dublin. It is very difficult to ask certain questions if one has an enumerator-based collection. One would have to go into a house in which one of the residents suffered from mental ill health to ask, "Are you mentally ill?" That creates a wee problem. The wording in question 7 is, perhaps, softer.

**Marlyn Glen:** I do not want to talk about the Scottish Executive's see me campaign; however, we are trying to get rid of the stigma that is attached to mental as well as physical ill health. I am concerned about that. I see that you are trying to be helpful, but, in trying to be helpful, you could cause confusion.

**Ian Máté:** So you think that, rather than use the wording

"a psychological or emotional condition",

question 7 should use language that matches that of question 18?

**Marlyn Glen:** Yes.

**Duncan Macniven:** I see your point. We will be happy to have a look at that.

**Marlyn Glen:** That is smashing—thank you.

**Duncan Macniven:** I should say that the form that you have in front of you is not the settled form for 2006. There is an excellent opportunity for such comparisons to be made. It is interesting that your fresh eye has noticed two points that had not come over to us strongly.

**Marlyn Glen:** I return to the ethnicity classification. The committee understands that the Executive has just concluded a consultation on proposals to review the ethnicity questions for the 2011 census. Will you give us the background to the review and update us on when the results will become available? You mentioned that you were expecting two questions on ethnicity to be asked.

**Ian Máté:** The consultation period has just finished and we have had a report on the responses to the consultation that blandly states what the responses are and whether they are from an organisation or an individual. From those responses, we will develop our recommendations, which I think will come out at the end of October. That is the current position.

I think that there will probably be a recommendation to have two questions on ethnicity. One of them will allow people to affirm their national identity. That will mean that someone who lives in Scotland will be able to affirm that they are Scottish, regardless of their ethnic group, which is important to some communities that I have worked with in Glasgow.

The other question will be along the lines of the 2001 ethnic question, but will not include reference to colour. For example, people will be able to describe themselves as being African or Caribbean rather than black. The categories will not equate with continents, strictly speaking; there will probably be a category for people of middle eastern origin—I am not sure what name it will have; it might be “Arabian”—as well as categories for people from Europe, Asia and Africa. There will be a mixed category, which will probably come at the bottom of the list of options. That is because it was thought that when the 2001 census put the mixed category after white, there was a white supremacist implication, which was not helped by the rather unfortunate fact that the rest of the categories followed the designations of the South African police. That is the position that we are heading towards.

In addition, we must decide whether to ask about someone’s current cultural affiliation or their ancestry. I do not think that we are set on exactly how we will word that question, even though we are pretty sure about the tick box options and about allowing people to affirm that they are Scottish or whatever they feel that they are.

**Marlyn Glen:** Is the GROS satisfied that, in carrying out the consultation on the census ethnicity classifications, the Executive ensured the widest possible participation of community groups?

**Ian Máté:** The problem of getting through the gatekeepers has already been mentioned. I am not sure that we have managed to do so completely, although many of the respondents say that they consulted people in their groups.

The census test is now conducted in north and south Glasgow. We have chosen those areas because they are the richest in ethnic minority communities and capture as many of those communities as possible. We will cover the Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Chinese communities, and I think that asylum seekers will be covered in north Glasgow.

Richard Morrison, who is sitting in the public gallery, will run a follow-up survey, in which he will ask residents, rather than representatives, what they thought of the questions, but that will be the final stage of the process. We have gone through only the first gate-keeping stage.

**Marlyn Glen:** The 2006 test will be the first examination of the modified ethnicity questions. What plans has the GROS put in place to ensure that the questions will be tested effectively?

**Duncan Macniven:** The plans are those to which Ian Máté has just alluded. We have been careful to pick an area that is the richest in different groups from the ethnic minority community, because we attach such importance to that community.

**Ian Máté:** We still have the problem that we do not know who we are going to use as interviewers for those delicate questions. It would be quite nice to use members of the ethnic communities but we always have problems recruiting them.

**Marlyn Glen:** We have come across that problem in many areas.

My next question is about language. Have the results of the Scottish Parliament cross-party group on the Scots language consultation been passed to the GROS? What is the current situation?

**Duncan Macniven:** We are very conscious of the Scots language and what the group has said about it. Perhaps Ian Máté is the best person to tell you what we are doing about it.

**Ian Máté:** We have developed a matrix question that meets all the needs that have been expressed, but we are not sure whether it will work—that is what we are going to test. It tries to get at literacy, whether people speak English or another language, whether people speak Scots or

Gaelic, whether someone's first language is an ethnic minority language and whether someone uses British Sign Language or other methods of communication. It is the Jack-of-all-trades language question.

I do not know whether the question will work, but that is part of the testing process. When we did the focus group research, it seemed that civil servants—who formed the first two practice groups that we chose to help us to ensure that our methods were sensible—did not like it, but we get a better response from members of the public, who do not see the question as so strange. We still have a problem with the Scots language, because for some reason Scots language speakers often do not think that they speak Scots.

**Marlyn Glen:** I must admit that I had some concerns about the question on Scots. What kind of Scots are you asking about? I mentioned it in the north-east and people immediately asked whether it was about Doric or Lallans. What is Scots? I would be interested to know whether my colleagues would tick the box or not.

**Duncan Macniven:** Is the tongue that people speak in Shetland Scots or not? That is one of the issues that arose during consultation. It is hard to define Scots, whereas Gaelic is not hard to define. Question 10—the one that Ian Máté spoke about—is basically the same as the question that we asked about Gaelic in 2001, on which we are publishing a report next Monday. The question worked pretty well, but extending it might run into problems. We will see. It would be good to have a question on the Scots language in the census, but there are practical difficulties—we are exploring how great they are and how they can be overcome.

**The Convener:** It is important that you find a way to do it. We know that many Scots speakers do not recognise that they speak Scots and that many of them cannot read or write it. The issue is quite difficult, because of the different regional aspects.

**Nora Radcliffe:** Why are the language questions closed and not open? Would it be better to ask "What is your native language?" or "What language do you speak in your normal day-to-day activities?"

11:15

**Duncan Macniven:** It is far easier to construct precise outputs from closed questions. Precise outputs are important. However, we use more open questions or we have a box marked "Another—please specify". For example, we had such a box for religion in the 2001 census and we got the Terry's old geezers and gals and the Jedi knights, to which Ian Máté alluded, as well as

proper religions. However, the complexity of analysing those returns meant that we did not get the information out in the first-round results.

Other countries, including Canada, have worked with open questions on ethnicity, for example. However, because of the expense and time that it takes to code open questions, it was necessary to publish results that were based on a sample of the response—in other words, a sample of the 96 per cent return. The practical issues of expense and time push us towards closed questions.

**Marlyn Glen:** The languages question in the 2006 test will ask people to indicate which languages they can understand, speak, read and write. Evidence from the Commission for Racial Equality suggests that people may find the format of the question confusing. The CRE is concerned that respondents may enter all the languages in which they can communicate, including BSL and French, for example. Further to your previous answer, are you confident that people will understand the question or will its format confuse them?

**Duncan Macniven:** We are not confident on that and we will have to test it. That said, the format worked for Gaelic in 2001, which is not a poor starting point.

**Ian Máté:** If the question does not work, we have a problem. We now have a Gaelic question and a Scots question, which we tried to develop fairly rigorously in 1997 through cognitive research and that sort of thing. We have the literacy question to address the issue of literacy levels. Moreover, the issue of service needs requires a question on whether people speak English. We have a horror of ending up with about five questions in order to meet all the needs that the language question is trying to address. Although that may eventually have to become the solution, I hope that that is not the case.

The languages question is a simplified version of the first draft, in which we asked whether people had learned the languages at home or elsewhere. We are making further changes to the write-in box below the question, so that we can add in eastern European languages. We want to make it clear that the question is not about hobbies. That is why we have only one box, so that people who learned French at school are not encouraged to put that in. We are walking a difficult tightrope, but we want to get the information, even if it is not totally accurate. We will be able to test that in south and north Glasgow.

**Marlyn Glen:** Are you trying to concentrate on the question of people's first language?

**Duncan Macniven:** No.

**Marlyn Glen:** That would be a different question. The issue is complicated.

**Duncan Macniven:** It is. As we have said, we feel that we have not thought our way through the issue as yet. We have time to do so and the test will help.

**Ian Máté:** We need to know from the communities what languages people talk among themselves and whether they also talk English. The question is not just about one language.

**Marlyn Glen:** If I may, I will return to question 9, which is on marital or civil partnership status. I like the change that has been made to the question. The Justice 1 Committee is looking at the Family Law (Scotland) Bill, which provides for legal status to be given to cohabitation. As that change may come into law by 2011, are you thinking of adding a question on cohabitation?

**Duncan Macniven:** No, not to question 9. The issue is picked up in the questions on household structure on the first page.

**Ian Máté:** In 2011, as we did in 2001, we will run a relationship matrix, which includes the option of cohabitation. The question is not included in the current paper for economic reasons. We do not need to test it again.

**Duncan Macniven:** But the issue will be picked up at the household level.

**Mr McGrigor:** The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities thinks that the question

"What religion ... do you belong to?"

is unfortunately worded, because many people consider themselves to have a religion but may not practise it regularly. The council suggests that the question "What is your religion?" would be better and simpler. What are your thoughts on that? Might you amend the question?

**Duncan Macniven:** It would be possible to amend the question. The wording in the 2006 form is the same as that used in 2001, which was the first time that we asked a religion question in a census—we had to change the legislation for that. I feel that the question worked quite well in 2001 and that the arguments for having a continuous series to allow us to examine changes over 10 years might outweigh the point that the Jewish community has made. However, we will consider the suggestion.

**Ian Máté:** Last week, we had a meeting with a liaison group of religious leaders, at which the Buddhists made the same point: Buddhism is not really a religious body to which people belong. The other religious leaders agreed. However, we have not yet changed the wording of the question, mainly because I am worried about comparability with the 2001 census. Many of the users of the

results from that question were academic, so I want to ask academic users to consider what the effect of such a change would be. If we ask "What is your current religion?" we might get a much larger number of people affirming a particular religion than happened with the present wording, which might mean that we lose comparability. However, in the census test, we will move towards the wording that you have suggested.

**Mr McGrigor:** I imagine that the point is that, if we ask which religion people belong to, some people might consider that, unless they regularly attend a church, synagogue or mosque, they do not really belong to a religion and so would have difficulty answering the question.

**Ian Máté:** We must decide whether the purpose of the question is to find regular churchgoers or people who just generally affirm a religion.

**Duncan Macniven:** I think that, with the kirk, the number of people who chose the option Church of Scotland in 2001 exceeded considerably the membership figures that were held by the headquarters of the church at 121 George Street. Therefore, it seems that people have not applied the strict definition that the Buddhists and Jewish people who have been mentioned may fear.

**Mr McGrigor:** I am slightly sceptical about the wording of question 20 in the 2006 form, which is:

"Last week, were you doing any of the following".

The question works only with the options "Voluntary work" and

"Looking after home and family".

Surely it should say "being" rather than "doing". That seems to be just basically bad English. That may be a picky point, but it stares out at me.

**Duncan Macniven:** That is interesting—I will read the question with a fresh eye. However, I believe that the question is a traditional one that has been in censuses since time immemorial and it seems to work, despite its lack of English logic.

**Ian Máté:** We will consider the wording again, but the question reflects the output. We normally ask a series of complicated questions and I did not have room for more questions, so I thought that I would try a simple solution.

**Mr McGrigor:** I have no intention of changing something that has been used for ages.

**Ian Máté:** The question reflects the output of the census rather than the questions that we have asked in the past.

**Duncan Macniven:** It sounds as if there is scope to pick up Mr McGrigor's point, so I thank him.

**Nora Radcliffe:** I can be just as niggly. Question 5 has a diamond bullet-point in it that says:

"Only answer this question if you have answered 'Yes' to Question 5".

I assume that question 4 is meant. That may just be a typo.

I want to go back to what you said about standing on the shoulders of the 2001 census. I am intrigued to know how you know what you missed in 2001.

**Duncan Macniven:** In 2001, we carried out for the first time a follow-up door-to-door survey that followed closely on the heels of the census. We got responses to that and compared them with the census responses. Some folk completed both; some completed neither—we got no reply from them; and some completed one but not the other. By comparing the data that we got, using statistical techniques, it was possible to estimate the responses of the 4 per cent of people who did not return the census and confirm the responses of the 96 per cent who did.

The process was carefully thought out and was exposed to academic scrutiny. Independent academic statisticians looked at what the census departments were proposing—it was something that we did along with the Northern Irish, English and Welsh—and it was thought to be good. Our use of it in 2001 gave the great advantage that we were covering 100 per cent of the population. That is an aspect of the 2001 census that we thought worked very well and it has not since been challenged. Although we will look at the process again later in the cycle, I expect that we will do something like it again.

**Nora Radcliffe:** Is there an argument for applying those survey techniques to the census, so that you get fuller information the first time around instead of having to impute it later?

**Duncan Macniven:** Yes, that is exactly what we are trying to do. We would prefer to get 100 per cent the first time around and for the follow-up survey just to confirm our results.

**Nora Radcliffe:** You said that you got a 96 per cent return. Did you have a 100 per cent issue? Is there a mechanism for picking up households that someone might come across but that you do not know about? Can enumerators add households?

**Duncan Macniven:** Yes. In 2011, we are going to strengthen two things. The first is the address list that we start with. Last time, we started with a good address list, but developments in addressing—we keep in touch with those developments, although the issue is the responsibility of local authorities—will allow us to move forward a lot and to avoid situations in which, damn it, a house has been demolished or a

new set of houses has sprung up without our knowledge. We see that quite a lot round here. We will have a more up-to-date and complete address list, which will be better tested because it will be used daily by local authorities.

The other thing that we will do is make it clearer that enumerators are obliged to check address lists and identify houses that are missed. That was done in 2001, but we feel that we will be able to do it better in 2011. You are right to focus on it, as the address list is an important tool in getting as complete an enumeration as we can.

**Nora Radcliffe:** The issue of confidentiality is mentioned in the test census form. However, in order to get accurate information, people must be confident about the confidentiality with which their answers will be treated, so perhaps that message should be splattered everywhere.

**Duncan Macniven:** That is an interesting subject to address, without taking up too much space. We emphasised the confidentiality of the census at the time that it was taken. Perhaps this is a naïve observation, but I feel that people are confident in the census as a brand and in the registrar general as a confidential custodian of information who is independent, or semi-independent, of the Government.

**Nora Radcliffe:** It is hard to reach people who are not sure of that confidentiality.

**Duncan Macniven:** I am not sure whether an awful lot of people say, "The census form says it's confidential, but I don't believe it and won't complete it," but that may be part of the penumbra.

11:30

**Nora Radcliffe:** Is that partly why people do not want to put down their income? They are sort of confident but have concerns.

**Duncan Macniven:** You may be right. That is certainly part of a penumbra of factors that affect folk's attitude to the census.

**John Swinburne:** I notice that the census test for 2006 involves the household form. Thousands of people in the country are not in households, such as members of Her Majesty's forces and those poor souls who are incarcerated in prison. Are people who are in prison given the visitors page? Who fills in such forms? Does a prison governor do that? Is a way found to obtain the answers that you require from the thousands of prisoners or are they ignored?

**Duncan Macniven:** That is a good point, which also applies to people who are in care homes or in hospital. You are absolutely right: we have given the committee the household form. We have a separate arrangement for enumerating what we



call communal establishments, such as those that we have spoken about. You picked prisons as an example. Ian Máté can talk about that in more detail and describe how the system operates there, if that would help.

**Ian Máté:** I am sorry; I do not know how the system operates in prisons, because I was not involved in such work in 2001. I will know later, but I suspect that prisoners fill in a form themselves. The problem that we have had is that prisoners do not take seriously questions such as those about whether they have been there for six months, which makes them resident. When they are asked questions about their expectations or what their last job was—when they were last employed—they take that as a joke.

We have a communal establishment form, which is slightly different. It establishes mainly whether people are usual residents in the communal establishment or whether they should have been enumerated somewhere else, which we check.

We are also talking to Shelter Scotland about having a different communal establishment form that is relevant for the homeless and the roofless. We will not ask them how many cars they have or other irrelevant questions. We are considering census questions that are different for each communal establishment or for each group of people, but I am not sure about that, because that is a bit of a departure.

**The Convener:** Will you update the committee on the next steps to develop the 2011 census?

**Duncan Macniven:** As you will have gathered, our eye is on the 2006 test. We will run that and probably publish the results in a new version of the consultation paper that we issued a year or so ago. In the light of that, we will make adjustments for the rehearsal that Nora Radcliffe talked about, after which we will repeat the process in the lead-up to the census.

In that repetition, more formal stages will take place, because we will publish and present to the Parliament a more formal proposal—a white paper, if you like. I hope that we will receive parliamentary feedback on that white paper, which will allow us to undertake the final formal stages, to which I referred in my introduction. This place needs to approve the census and it would do so by a set of orders and regulations. Those would contain the census form and set out exactly how the census would be taken. The instruments would go into detail. In that final iteration, we will work up to formal approval by the Parliament.

I particularly welcomed the opportunity to appear before the committee because we are anxious for parliamentary input as we go along, to avoid the doomsday scenario that we end up with a proposal that keeps users happy, meets users'

needs and perhaps keeps communities happy, but which has a flaw that the Parliament spots and which causes us to change our plans at the last moment. Between now and late 2009 or early 2010, when the formal approval process will happen, we are keen to open and continue such dialogue with you, to ensure that we have picked up the issues that are important to the Parliament.

**The Convener:** The committee will continue to monitor with great interest the development of the 2011 census. Thank you for appearing.

11:35

*Meeting suspended until 11:38 and thereafter continued in private until 11:50.*



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