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Y Dirprwy Weinidog a'r Prif Chwip  
Deputy Minister and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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4 June 2019

Dear John,

As the Committee will be aware, we are often faced with limitations in terms of statistical data around equalities due to our reliance on survey data and the fact we are often interested in small groups of the population. I'm writing to update you on various aspects of work being undertaken by the Office for National Statistics and our own statisticians that will help support our understanding of outcomes by different equality characteristics. This follows a very positive meeting I held recently with Iain Bell, the Deputy National Statistician for Population and Public Policy.

#### Preparations for the 2021 Census

In December, the UK Government issued a White Paper<sup>1</sup> containing the proposals for the 2021 Census of Population in England and Wales and the First Minister issued a written statement. The White Paper includes welcome proposals for the first time around collecting data on sexual orientation and gender identity as well as the inclusion of Roma as a category within the Ethnicity question.

On 1<sup>st</sup> May the UK Government introduced the Census (Return Particulars and Removal of Penalties) Bill. The main purpose of the Bill is to amend the Census Act 1920 to remove the penalty for not responding to new census questions on sexual orientation and gender identity, and to add sexual orientation and gender identity to the Schedule of that Act. This will mean that the 2021 Census can include questions on sexual orientation and gender identity that can be answered on a voluntary basis.

I understand that the Business Committee has referred scrutiny of the Legislative Consent Motion for the Bill to the ELG Committee.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-2021-census-of-population-and-housing-in-england-and-wales>

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

More widely, in 2020 the Minister for Finance & Trefnydd will be laying Census regulations for Wales and it is important that we scrutinise plans well ahead of then to ensure that appropriate consideration is being given in good time to issues in Wales.

Therefore, whilst the scrutiny of the LCM will be limited to the legislative competence in relation to this particular bill, I would also encourage the Committee to read the White Paper and consider inviting ONS to provide evidence to the committee on progress towards the next Census. This would be a useful follow on from their evidence to the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications committee last year.

### ONS and the Centre for Equalities and Inclusion

At our meeting, the Deputy National Statistician described how ONS have recently established a new ONS Centre for Equalities and Inclusion. The aim of the Centre is to improve the evidence base for understanding equity and fairness in the UK today, enabling new insights into key policy questions. The intention is for the small team in ONS to convene relevant expertise from across central and local government, academia, business and the third sector.

There is potential for the Centre to work with us to help us develop insight that will support our understanding of equalities in Wales and public bodies in their work on well-being assessments.

For example, over the summer the Centre will be publishing an article bringing together different sources of data on religion to better understand how religion relates to a range of key equalities outcomes and to identify where gaps in the data still exist.

The Welsh Government Chief Social Research Officer is on the Strategic Advisory Group of the Centre. It is of course welcome that the Centre has been established in the ONS' Newport headquarters and its location in South Wales provides us with an excellent opportunity to work in partnership.

ONS are also taking forward work in a number of other areas that will be of interest to the Committee. For example they have been looking at the quality of employment for disabled people, and are well linked in to UK Government work on understanding outcomes for asylum seekers and refugees.

### Ethnicity and disability pay gap

In our recent consultation on national milestones<sup>2</sup> we committed to investigating the feasibility of expanding the national well-being indicator on gender pay gap to identify disparities by ethnicity and disability. The Deputy National Statistician reported that this is also something that ONS have been investigating and over the summer hope to publish for the first time.

### Data linking

As I stated above there are often issues in analysing data by protected characteristics as we are reliant on surveys where questions may not be asked or the sample size might mean robust data cannot be produced, in particular for detailed categories or when seeking to analyse intersections of population groups.

By linking datasets together, and in particular using administrative data already held by government, it is possible to undertake research in a secure and ethical manner that will allow us to understand far more about the outcomes of different groups. When using administrative data, although there are often data quality issues, analysts are far less restricted by small numbers.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://gov.wales/measuring-our-nations-progress>

There is a great deal of work being undertaken in ONS and Welsh Government on this agenda. ONS are using powers under the Digital Economy Act to gather data from government that will help them improve official statistics. As an example project they provided support to the UK Government's Race Disparity Audit by linking together different datasets that better helped them understand outcomes for different ethnic groups.

The Welsh Government and ONS are also both part of the Administrative Data Research – UK partnership that is intended to maximise the use of administrative data for research. Welsh Government has received funding from ESRC for this work and we are developing a programme of research to support our Prosperity for All priorities – and a key focus will be on understanding inequality of outcomes.

### Well-being of Wales

In September last year, the Welsh Government Chief Statistician published the second statutory annual well-being report, *Well-being of Wales 2018*<sup>3</sup>. This report provides a state of the nation analysis of our progress towards the seven well-being goals which includes a chapter of analysis on our progress towards “A more equal Wales”. This brings together a wide range of data on well-being – including but not only the national well-being indicators – and considers them according to the different protected characteristics. For example last year the report covered issues such as hate crime and data from Stonewall Cymru which are not included in the national indicator set but add important insight into our understanding of well-being.

As far as possible, data on the national indicators are made available for different population groups. Almost all of the national indicators are easily available by gender (where it was appropriate or practical).

Through working in partnership with the ONS we will hopefully be able to identify opportunities to add insight to the Well-being report in future. The Chief Statistician has also been in dialogue with Chwarae Teg as part of their current Gender Equality Review to consider how our statistical products can be improved to add insight through a gender lens.

Our statisticians are also looking into the feasibility of providing a catalogue of datasets that are available according to different protected characteristics, to supplement the Well-being of Wales and other reports in future.

### National Survey for Wales

Despite the limitations described above, surveys do continue to provide valuable information which cannot be obtained from other sources; and for some equalities characteristics (e.g. age, disability, and sex), the group of interest is sufficiently common that robust results can be produced. Samples can also be combined across years to increase the precision of results further.

The National Survey for Wales<sup>4</sup> is a key source for equalities information in Wales. It is used to report on 15 of the 46 national indicators and covers a wide range of topics, so equalities characteristics can be investigated for a whole range of issues. Relevant recent outputs include bulletins on Hospital and GP services and on access to services.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://gov.wales/well-being-wales>

<sup>4</sup> <https://gov.wales/national-survey-wales>

I hope the Committee finds this information useful. I have asked for an update from the Deputy National Statistician later this year on various aspects of this work and will keep the Committee updated.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Hutt', written in a cursive style.

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