

## **Announcement of LAs for 2006 Case Studies**

### **HEADLINE** Four Local Authorities selected for population case studies

Four Local Authorities (LAs) have been selected for the current round of population case studies. They are Barnet, Derby, Hammersmith & Fulham and Welwyn Hatfield.

### **Background**

ONS is investigating ways of improving the quality of the mid-year population estimates. The aim is to find better methods to track population changes accurately, which will help to avoid a large gap occurring between the mid-year estimates and the count from the 2011 Census and to gain a better understanding of the causes of any remaining differences.

The mid-year population estimates are derived using the cohort component method. This method takes as its starting point the previous year's estimate, ages on the population by a year, takes account of births and deaths, and adjusts for migration in and out of each area. The figures for numbers of births and deaths are well-founded, but there is some uncertainty about measuring levels of international and internal migration, which are derived from sample surveys and administrative processes. Areas with large numbers of young men can cause particular problems as their moves may not be picked up quickly or accurately by official sources. Other sub-populations which may be difficult to measure include students, ethnic minorities, Armed Forces and prisoners.

ONS has recently set up the Improving Migration and Population Statistics (IMPS) project to investigate these issues. The IMPS team is carrying out research to look at alternative data sources, ways of improving migration statistics, population sub-groups and other topics. The Local Authority case studies are another key component of IMPS. They will concentrate on potential issues with the estimates by selecting representative LAs and researching how the estimates might be improved.

### **The LA case studies**

ONS will work in partnership with a small number of LAs to investigate whether additional national and local knowledge and sources could be used to assist the compilation of the population estimates. We aim to gain a better understanding of how LAs use the population estimates, what other information and data sources they use, what particular issues affect population estimates within an LA and what methods and data sources are used by LAs to overcome these issues. This information will be considered in terms of how it can be applied to the production of the mid-year population estimates and quality assurance processes, either for all LAs or for groups of similar LAs.

The first step in selecting which authorities to study was to develop an evidence-based method. Local Authorities were grouped into 15 clusters using their scores on eight characteristics which represent possible difficulties in measuring population numbers accurately. Four clusters were chosen for the current round from among the clusters which had high levels on some or all of

these factors. In each of the four clusters, the LA closest to the centre of the cluster was selected for study. [Download](#) more information on the methodology used to select the LAs.

Any changes in methodology which are recommended in the course of the IMPS programme would be discussed with relevant users. If these improvements result in revisions to the mid-year estimates, these would be applied in line with ONS's Revisions Policy. Unlike the 2004 studies it is not ONS's intention to make revisions to an individual LA's population estimate but to make improvements to LAs or groups of LAs that apply more generally.

We plan to complete the current round of studies by July 2006. ONS will then publish the outcome of the studies and evaluate their success, including a review of the criteria and approach for selecting LAs. ONS currently intend to carry out a further round of case studies starting in Autumn 2006.