

2021 Census in Shropshire

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) will carry out the 2021 Census on 21st March 2021. The Census will provide a picture of England and Wales, revealing the size and characteristics of the population and providing valuable information that will be used to inform policy development, funding allocations and future service planning. The 2021 census will be predominantly an online Census with paper forms made available to people that are unable to take part online.

Each household in Shropshire will receive a postcard during the 22nd-27th February 2021 raising awareness of the 2021 Census, followed by an initial contact pack (during the 3rd-12th March 2021) requesting each household to complete the Census questionnaire online or by requesting a paper questionnaire. A reminder phase begins after the 22nd March 2021 for non-respondents involving reminder letters and finally visits from field staff. Completing the Census is a legal requirement and as a last resort ONS have the option of taking court action against non-respondents.

Help will be available to Shropshire households via support centres located in the libraries in Shropshire's largest six market towns (Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Bridgnorth, Market Drayton, Ludlow and Whitchurch), via online guidance, a national helpline and via trained field staff. The questionnaire can be completed using a mobile phone and during rehearsals ONS have found younger family members have frequently helped complete the questionnaire.

ONS 2021 Census plans will be responsive to the latest guidelines from central government on social distancing during the Covid-19 pandemic and so may be subject to change.

In order to ensure that the 2021 Census is as successful as possible, the ONS has recruited Roger Belham, a long-term resident of north Shropshire, as the Census Engagement Manager (CEM) for Shropshire. Roger is tasked with ensuring that people in Shropshire are aware of the 2021 Census and that they are encouraged and supported to take part on the 21st March 2021. This will include people living in households and people resident in communal establishments such as hospitals, care homes and student halls of residence.

ONS have identified ten key population groups in Shropshire to help Roger Belham prioritise his work which are set out below. This list is not limited, and Roger will be guided by the knowledge he is gathering locally. Recognising access to broadband and the internet may be an issue in parts of rural Shropshire he is keen to ensure enough paper questionnaires are readily available.

• People from minority ethnic groups including Eastern Europeans, where language may present a barrier	
• People whose physical / mental / learning impairment may prevent them from responding	
• Adults aged 80 years and over	• Veterans
• People living in low income households	• LGBT+ community
• People lacking digital skills aged 65 years and over	
• Transient communities such as;	• Bargees and continuous cruisers
• Homeless and rough sleepers	• Gypsy and traveller communities

Reaching out to these key population groups and encouraging their maximum participation in the 2021 Census is key to the success of the 2021 Census in Shropshire. To achieve this Roger Belham enthusiastic to work with town and parish council's, voluntary / charitable organisations, community groups, businesses and other organisations throughout Shropshire to help build trust amongst Shropshire communities.

ONS recognise that the endorsement and influence of community leaders can help local people understand the value of the 2021 Census and raise awareness of where they can find help if needed. It is important local people understand that their questionnaire responses will not be shared with anyone other organisations and will be stored securely for 100 years for the benefit of future generations.

Shropshire Council is supporting ONS in delivering the 2021 Census in Shropshire in a number of ways including providing local intelligence and staff expertise, supporting Roger Belham in his community engagement work and raising awareness of recruitment opportunities.

Roger Belham is happy to present further information and respond to any questions that town and parish councillors may have. In particular he would welcome suggestions and contacts that he could pursue to further spread awareness of the 2021 Census. Roger Belham is also able to provide posters and other materials to town and parish councils upon request. Further information is available on the ONS website <https://census.gov.uk/> and for recruitment <https://www.censusjobs.co.uk/>.

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