



National
Records of
Scotland

NRS

Annual Business Plan
2021-22

Our Vision

To preserve the past, record the present and inform the future.

Our Mission

Increase our reach and impact and be recognised as a trusted, expert, and professional organisation.

Our Ethos

We put people at the heart of what we do and deliver in accordance with our values.

Our Values

- **Professional:** Collaborating to share our professional skills and knowledge whilst increasing our skills and expertise.
- **Respectful:** Listening and respecting different views, learning from others and expanding our knowledge to grow together.
- **Accountable:** Being responsible for what we do, delivering with transparency and clarity of purpose.
- **Customer Focused:** Knowing our customers to understand their needs, delivering a positive experience and encouraging feedback to improve what we do.

About NRS

National Records of Scotland (NRS) is a non-Ministerial department of the Scottish Government, supporting the Registrar General for Scotland and the Keeper of the Records for Scotland. Our work underpins the fabric of Scottish society; telling the story of our nation through the records we hold and the data about the people of Scotland we gather and produce.

As the official Scottish national archive we are guardians of over 800 years of irreplaceable national documents spanning the 12th to the 21st centuries, touching on virtually every aspect of Scottish life. We are the Scottish official source of demographic statistics and administer the census of Scotland's population. We produce information about our population, households, migration, vital events (such as births, deaths and marriages), life expectancy and electoral statistics which help inform policy decisions across central and local government and the private and third sectors.

We support Scottish public bodies' compliance with the Public Records Scotland Act 2011 and, as expert advisers in information and records management, we fulfil a leadership role for the archive sector and work to preserve physical and digital records. We make our information as accessible as is reasonably possible while preserving it for the future, and are committed to making more information available over time through digital channels. We work in partnership with the Scottish Government and the wider public sector to deliver a national Data Linkage Framework to facilitate ethical research that protects privacy whilst benefiting Scotland and informing national investment priorities.

Evaluation of our 2020-21 Business Priorities

We said

In managing the implications of the COVID-19 outbreak facing Scotland and the world, NRS has refocused its delivery priorities for 2020-21 and has concentrated on the impact of the pandemic on our organisation. This has included putting new working arrangements in place, temporary service measures, which are published on our website and publication of weekly statistics of deaths involving COVID-19. For much of 2020, we expect a great deal of our focus to continue to be managing our COVID-19 response and planning to ensure that we can resume core activities as quickly as appropriate once restrictions are lifted.

We did

- We aided the transition of staff to home working by establishing new ways of working and re-prioritising tasks allowing us to maintain most existing services, develop and deliver new record releases and enhance existing services and collections. We identified priority services and, where it was critical and impossible to be delivered from home, we have re-established these services on-site in line with COVID-19 safe working practices. This has all been done in a way that ensures the health and wellbeing of our staff and continues to deliver excellent services to our users. We have developed the ScotlandsPeople service which has proved increasingly popular with the public during lockdown, supported our partners across the public sector to deliver their important services to citizens, aided many academic users in continuing their research and delivered access to our records and statutory registers to support citizens and the economy.
- We established our COVID-19 Wellbeing and Working from Home Group, reporting to our COVID-19 Incident Management Team. This group produced and disseminated comprehensive guidance to support initial home-working including the provision of equipment. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic we have adapted our support to help staff work through the pandemic in light of changing Government guidelines. Our priority has been the wellbeing and health and safety of our people during extremely difficult and challenging circumstances. We enhanced our existing wellbeing offering to support colleagues regardless of working location through the development of a dedicated wellbeing page on our NRS intranet, a comprehensive A-Z wellbeing booklet, weekly communications on tips, guidance and routes to sourcing support. We conducted a Pulse Survey in May 2020 to capture feedback from our people on how they are coping which has fed into our corporate People Action Plan.
- Within one month of the initial lockdown we equipped the majority of our staff for home working, deploying 723 pieces of equipment including 149 laptops and 146 monitors.
- As NRS services became critical to the COVID-19 national response our IT team reacted quickly to support necessary changes, including the transition of the Registrars across Scotland to remote working and provision of seven-day support for both registrations and the associated information feeds to help COVID-19 decision making.
- Our corporate website also began to see unprecedented traffic due to the publication of COVID-19 stats. We immediately responded, providing additional capacity, enhancing web security and improving accessibility of the website.
- We put in place emergency provisions to allow us to continue to deliver services around the provision of information and records in urgent cases, supporting the

Scottish legal and judicial systems. We worked with colleagues in Registers of Scotland, Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament to ensure that Acts of the Scottish Parliament could continue to be sealed and pass into law in a COVID-secure way.

- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic we have produced weekly NRS COVID-19 mortality statistics which quickly became one of the key pieces of evidence to support the government's understanding of the impact of COVID-19. The quality of the work has been widely recognised by many key stakeholders including the First Minister and Cabinet Secretaries, Chief Medical Officer, National Clinical Adviser, local government, academia, the media and the wider public.
- We continued to improve mortality analyses, responding to constant demand for new insights, while maintaining quality and accuracy. This included new research involving linkage with census data to provide invaluable insights into the impact COVID-19 has had on different ethnic groups and on people with a disability.
- In order to strengthen our organisational resilience and support the increased workload resulting from COVID-19 we appointed three business continuity leads. One of these is focusing on business continuity policy, plans and procedures for the organisation, including reviewing our capability, strategic training and exercises. The other two posts are services-specific and are working to support Estates and Customer and Archives around their local resilience plans, working closely with the policy post holder and across the service areas to put in place projects and actions to improve crisis response. These appointments have aided in our response to and recovery from the current pandemic, and also improved our ability to identify and manage any future disruptive incidents.

We said

We will work with a range of partners to design and deliver the next Census with successful and lasting benefits for Scotland.

We did

- In light of the decision to move Scotland's Census to 2022 we have successfully re-scheduled and baselined new plans to meet the new census date.
- The census order and regulations were re-laid in the Scottish Parliament and gained assent to reflect the new census date. Engagement with users has been key over the year to ensure we develop high-quality outputs to meet user needs, and latterly to ensure that they are aware of plans and to address any concerns they may have with the change in date. Substantial progress has been made on finalising design of key census methods, systems and operational processes. A good start has also been made on testing in readiness for going live in 2022. Statistical methodologies were developed and tested using data from 'Rehearsal 2019' and have since been reviewed by our internal and external review panels and will be published on our website. Key systems such as our auto coding - transforming data captured on paper and assigning electronic classifications to aid analysis and the manual coding of remaining items not automatically coded - have been built and are now being tested. The systems for ingesting and processing our data are being designed and built including those for management information for reporting on returns during live operations. We have also made good progress in designing methods and operational processes and systems for the Census Coverage Survey, which runs 6 weeks after census to ensure that we have a complete estimate of the population. We have continued to work very closely with the Office for National Statistics (ONS)

and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) to harmonise on methods and outputs where possible and to ensure that we learn lessons from their census experience. We also continue to work closely with other countries through the census forum. We have developed a strong approach to statistical quality assurance and our use of administrative data and we are currently developing our Target Operating Model for live running.

- We have designed the statistical and operational approach for the Census Coverage Survey, which will run six weeks after the census collection period. This independent survey will allow us to adjust census results for over and under coverage, where we have duplicate returns or where people may not have filled in their census forms.
- We have established robust internal and external review panels for developing our statistical methodologies for processing census data. The External Methods Assurance Panel is chaired by an external expert and the panel provides valued advice and assurance that our methods are fit for purpose.
- We published Admin Based Population Estimates for 2016. This was the accumulation of four years' work to secure access to administrative data, gain permissions from Privacy and Ethics groups, establish the quality of the data for the way in which we intend to use it as well as developing methodologies.
- We have developed innovative uses of administrative data to help us quality assure the census data when we collect it next year.
- Our IT teams continued to support the census delivery. A number of strategic components have been delivered or are in active build in readiness for Census 2022 including Security Operations, Census Outputs, Census Data Gateway and Census Data Processing.

We said

We will deliver high-quality public services to our customers through our online channels and manage the transition to re-open in-person and other services in line with Scotland's phased approach to managing COVID-19. In doing so, we will also support the delivery of registration services through local authorities across Scotland. We continue to identify our priorities for new and enhanced digital services over the coming years.

We did

- We refocused the registration system around delivery of key services (death registrations, births and marriages/civil partnerships), concentrating initially on meeting significantly increased demands on death registration by quickly implementing measures to allow remote registration.
- In addition, we paused work on births and marriage/civil partnership before gradually reintroducing these services within the developing framework of national restrictions, and innovated a hybrid birth registration system which minimised attendance time at registration office to check the final register page.
- These measures allowed the registration service to respond flexibly to the changing circumstances of the pandemic, and maintained consistent civil status records throughout.

We said

We will deliver high-quality statistics by meeting our commitments in the NRS Statistics Plan, in line with UK standards and through enhancement of our statistical services. We will continue to work with stakeholders and users to ensure that important high-quality evidence on the COVID-19 pandemic is made available. We will increase our efforts to draw value from administrative and survey data, working with academia, government and others to inform and monitor social and economic policies and in doing so bring benefit to people across Scotland.

We did

- We produced statistics to inform and shape public policy and debate around key public health issues such as Scotland's high numbers of drug-related deaths, as well as deaths among the homeless.
- We continued to develop new and innovative ways of producing and presenting our information to communicate meaningful statistics that maximise public value. The Registrar General's Annual Review incorporated fresh insights from recent COVID-19 mortality data alongside a more traditional look back over the key demographic trends that emerged in 2019.
- Through the NHS Central Register, we continued to support our partners in health, local government and the third sector, on administration and provision of services to the public. This included supporting important medical research, and enhancing Scottish statistics on population and migration.
- We continued to play a central role in supporting research and developing the data linkage service in Scotland, working with our partners across Government, health and academia to further research using Scotland's rich sources of administrative data.

We said

We will deliver NRS archive services by continuing to plan delivery of our forward strategy to protect, preserve and make available our records, investing in digital archiving and planning long-term storage, whilst also continuing to grow our engagement with our stakeholders and the wider archive and record-keeping sector and ensuring that Scotland's response to COVID-19 is reflected in the historical record.

We did

- We started work to define and quantify our future physical storage needs and began strategic planning for Digital Archiving. We worked with Registers of Scotland to develop a mechanism for the mass transfer of 'born digital' records to NRS, and for the automation of much of the processing work required on their arrival.
- We have conducted two surveys to capture the impact of COVID-19 on the public sector recordkeeping community in Scotland. These provided an overview of the initial and ongoing impact of the COVID-19 disruption on the sector and the potential implications for the future which will feed into our future planning for supporting and advising the sector.
- We contributed to the 'Empire, Slavery and Scotland's Museums' project to provide the archival perspective and learn lessons which we can apply to our own practices.
- We engaged online with a wide variety of sectoral and stakeholder groups including community groups, reaching wider and larger audiences than had been possible through physical events. We amended our collecting policy to reflect the importance

of preserving records created in response to COVID-19 and extended our web archiving service to collect snapshots of the websites and Twitter feeds of key Scottish public authorities at the forefront of the country's response to COVID-19.

We said

We will grow and invest in our people, developing our organisation to enhance the way we operate, through investing in skills, knowledge management, leadership and capacity of our organisation. We will continue to mature our governance to support our people-based approaches.

We did

- We identified staff needs and NRS requirements from staff from analysis of the staff survey and business delivery. From this we have prioritised short, medium and long-term goals aligned with the actions to achieve these in a way that maximises the benefit to our staff and of our staff to the organisation.
- Our People Action Plan was informed by our annual staff survey results, our COVID-19 Pulse survey feedback, our Staff Engagement Network and other staff feedback and focuses on the key themes of Managing Change, Leadership, Communications, Organisational Development, Staff Engagement and Culture.
- We invested in the knowledge, skills and professional practices of 30% of our workforce, and supported the career development pathways of nominated individuals at university level. We also actively promoted access to coaching, mentoring and peer-to-peer development.
- We have increased opportunities for our people to engage in co-creating improvements and changes, including induction redesign, learning product design and commissioning, communication and information on our intranet and migration to a new Learning Experience Platform.

We said

We will mature and improve our IT services through investment in our infrastructure, augmented by increased customer insight to inform our priorities and secure efficient, high-quality digital services. We will focus on major programmes and improvements including Census, network, hosting and security together with additional COVID-19 and other related improvements.

We did

- We completed our programme to consolidate our technology environments, providing significant benefits in security, operability, performance and operating cost.
- We finalised our network replacement programme, moving from seven separate networks to a single robust and secure network across NRS.
- Significant improvements have also been made in the security, monitoring and recoverability of our services.
- We delivered a solution to enable the publication of the Cabinet Papers to be made available digitally for the first time. The initial Press Release successfully launched and we are now working on a public access solution.

We said

We will improve our programme management, information governance, delivery infrastructure and our estate to ensure our buildings are fit for purpose and support our long term goals.

We did

- We recruited a Delivery Director to establish a framework and governance for robust approach to initiating, managing, delivering and embedding change across the organisation and ensure programmes and projects are delivered in a consistent, holistic way that allows us to maintain service levels and deliver Census 2022, whilst creating scalable, strategic growth opportunities for the organisation as a whole.
- We have revised governance arrangements for information security within our organisation, identifying the Director of Information and Records Services as accountable to the Executive Management Board for this, and supporting them with an Information Security Committee made up of specialists in cybersecurity, information governance and physical security.
- The committee provides her with assurance on information security matters and highlights risks for escalation.
- Additional staff resource has been brought in to further support information governance within Scotland's Census 2022 Programme and across the organisation, as well as to help us work towards the Digital Economy Act accreditation for our Data Sharing and Linkage Service.
- The major upgrade and repair of the stone, dome, roof and windows of the Grade A listed building, West Register House, was close to completion by the end of the financial year.
- We have increased our internal buildings expertise over recent years to ensure we can plan and identify the essential maintenance of our iconic and high-profile buildings in the World Heritage site as well as maintain integrity of the structures to deliver against the critical business needs.

Our 2021-22 Annual Business Plan priorities

We will continue to build on our achievements in the financial year 2020-21 and have approved our Annual Business Plan commitments for the year ahead. In 2021-22 we will:

- Continue to refocus our delivery priorities to manage the implications of the COVID-19 outbreak for as long as required, including new working arrangements, temporary service measures, and publication of COVID-19 statistics.
- Work with a range of partners to deliver the live Census in Spring 2022 with successful and lasting benefits for Scotland.
- Continue to deliver high-quality public services to our customers through our online channels and manage the transition to re-open in person and other services in line with Scotland's response to COVID-19. In doing so, we will also support the delivery of registration services through local authorities across Scotland. We will feed into the digital archiving strategy as we plan priorities for new and enhanced digital services over the coming years.
- Deliver high-quality statistics in line with UK standards and through enhancement of our statistical services.
- Deliver NRS archive services, working with stakeholders to address the consequences of the disruption experienced during 2020-21 and recognising that there may be continued limitations given the current issues from COVID-19. We will continue to plan our programme of investment in digital archiving and long-term storage whilst also continuing to grow our engagement with our stakeholders and the wider archive and recordkeeping sector.
- Grow and invest in our people, developing our organisation to enhance the way we operate, through investing in skills, knowledge management, leadership and capacity of our organisation. We will continue to mature our governance to support our people-based approaches.
- Improve our programme management, information governance, delivery infrastructure and our estate to support our long-term goals.
- Mature and improve our IT services through investment in our infrastructure, with a focus on major programme delivery including Census, digital archiving, additional COVID-19 service responses and other business improvements.