

My name is Brian and I was a census collector in the 2011 Census.

The census collector's role was actually to chase up people who hadn't completed their census form. The reason we sometimes had to go back and help individuals fill out forms was I think because some people may have been not quite literate enough or they might not have been able to write, or in some cases it was where we were dealing with people from other backgrounds, that they didn't understand the forms or their English wasn't quite good enough to be have been able to answer the forms. So they needed somebody to help them there interpret that and then interpret their answers to put it on the form.

The process is about the individual people, but when for helping them to fill out the forms, it was very satisfying, but it was also very interesting to actually talk to those people and generally asking those questions and you would get a bit of more embellishment from them as well. So it was actually interesting talking to them and interacting with them, yeah.

It fitted in very well actually because I'd just taken early retirement and I retired the day before and the next day I started on the census. It was perfect timing.

Most people were fairly okay with responding to you and that sort of thing. You got the odd one who didn't really want to feel it or felt it was a bit of an intrusion and that sort of thing, so it was just encouraging them to get over that aspect and then complete the form.

From a training point of view, I would say once we were selected, then we were allocated obviously, in to teams. The Team Leader then contacted us and he arranged for us all to meet at a particular place that he'd arranged. And he dished out all of our gear that we were using, needed and what forms and what else have you we had to have.

We were given targets and we were given areas. The team leaders split us up into areas that we have streets, so how many streets we had to cover. And then we would go around and knock on doors and either collect the forms, if the people are filled them in but hadn't sort of sent them into whatever, and then we would take them back to the team leader. Then people would obviously, at that point, sometimes fill the forms in online and then after a couple of days we would get a new list of addresses that had still hadn't completed. So we'd go back to those addresses that hadn't completed. But those that had, we wouldn't be calling on again.

It was very flexible actually because I could find I could adjust that and I could fit it in with the flexibility. If I needed to nip somewhere, then I could do that and then come back and carry on with the round. Yes, it was very flexible to fit it in with the life, so it wasn't onerous by any means, no.

If you're watching this and thinking about doing the census, I personally would recommend it because I found it a very good experience. It was interesting, you're dealing with people. All right, you need to be prepared to do some walking but that keeps you fit, so that was good. And in the 2011 Census, we had the finest period of weather that we ever had. And I was walking around in shirtsleeves the whole time.

I was proud, yes. Because I felt I was doing something to help, not only get the information in for the government or the ONS wanted as well, but it was also helping people get through that process as well.