Rationale

Rationales are dialogical by nature and this version will hopefully offer instructive advice in that format. I feel it is necessary therefore, to elucidate the structure and value of this scheme before detailing the objectives that underpin the tasks students will undertake.

The scheme is entitled: 'Why did the government want so much personal information form people in the 1950s?'The purpose of the lessons is to interrogate the surveys used for the 1904, 1937/8 and 1953/4 investigations into the living standards of the British public, to conclude what the aim was, how they were conducted and how the results could be used. To reinforce the consequence of the surveys I have utilised the datasets from Coventry as part of the 1953/4 survey. I chose Coventry for three reasons. First, it offers a contrast to the completed forms from Salford as the experiences of the respondents in the two regions were very different. Second, the opportunity for students to work and handle historical documents, before seeing their impact through the datasets is an edifying experience, but only if it is manageable. I believe through reducing the number of fields considerably and only including one city of a similar size to Salford the scale of the task is reduced and more accessible for students. Finally, simply through logistical necessity, Coventry is the nearest location to my school used in the survey of sufficient size.

I primarily see this as targeting Key Stage 3 Year 9, but there is potential for Key Stage 4 Year 10 students accessing and developing the themes that are introduced. For Year 9 students, there is the prospect of considering how different surveys have been interpreted over time and what prompted them to begin with. Conceptually, the themes of cause and consequence, change and continuity and interpretation are strongly represented. However, there is inevitably scope to consider the diverse nature of respondents and how their lives were influenced. I have also considered the possibility of enlarging the context of the scheme for my own groups to consider the significance of the surveys in influencing government policy.

The topic offers students an opportunity to examine documents and consider their construction. The National Curriculum requires history to 'fire pupils' curiosity and imagination, moving and inspiring them with the dilemmas, choices and beliefs of people in the past.' I consider this an ideal vehicle with which to achieve this, as at the heart of the scheme is a propensity to ask enquiry questions and encourage students to delve into the lives of people within the past. As a starting point simple questions can be addressed such as; what did people eat? How many people in a household were employed? The larger more conceptual questions can then be derived from this starting point; why did people take part in surveys? What does the data reveal about the roles of the matriarch in households? Can we see any patterns or changes in the surveys over time? Forming perspectives of the lives of individuals and groups of individuals within the past provides a springboard from which to consider wider issues and macro aspects of the 20th Century. The direction and extent of the scheme is undeniable.

The scheme of work I have devised is designed to achieve the following:

1. To identify the ways in which data and information is collected and collated.
2. To assess the impact the collection of surveys would have on the respondents and how the process may impact on their answers.
3. To ascertain what the intended purpose of this collection and collation is/was.
4. To demonstrate both the need and inevitability of the government collection of data.
5. To question the amount of data the government has at its disposal.
6. To consider if the government 'knows too much' in today's society.
7. To judge who benefits from surveys being conducted.

As with many things in education, time is a political construction and I do not want to place too many restrictions on how long you spend on each task. As such, the time allowance for each episode of learning is guidance, if needed, rather than a prescriptive instruction. The aim of the scheme of learning is to provide students with the vehicle with which to question and explore various points of enquiry. Therefore, a level of fluidity and malleability is required to get the most from the tasks. The scheme is divided into three 60 minute lessons, but I am aware that for many teachers they may have lessons that range from forty-five minutes to an hour, so although there is a separation in the lesson design, they are closely connected and it would not be difficult to augment one into another or alter the sequence to spread across further lessons. The main task in each of the second and third lessons for example, is such that an extra lesson could be introduced to get students considering the codebooks or mystery task from a different angle.

I am of the opinion that pace is a crucial component to the opening of lessons and therefore support the notion of 'hooking' students from when they enter the room. As such, both of my lessons open with something that should spark interest in the lesson, involving students but equally supporting the content which they will be studying. The first lesson, for example, enables students to immediately start learning before they have even found their seat. Providing them with a Post-it and a question that involves higher order thinking, but it abstract enough to intrigue, should hopefully engage as well. Generally, students have a strong opinion on what could be improved in school – usually uniform in my experience – and allowing them to express those ideas before attempting to work out how to find the answer is empowering. Similarly, the second lesson has the option of again getting students to question information. The opening slide of the PowerPoint instantly provokes curiosity and is accessible across abilities. As it suggests in the notes, the 'secret' idea should be handled with care, but hopefully through the process, students should start to consider how information is gathered, the ways in which that information may be sensitive and also how that information is used. The alternative, and probably the way I would approach the lesson, is equally as engaging from the outset. Hooks are inherently pacey and engaging and allow for learning to commence as early in a lesson as possible.

On a related subject, I am not keen on introducing lesson objectives at the start of a lesson, or on occasion until the end of a lesson. Furthermore, I find the notion of objectives paradoxical as the teachers' and students' aims for learning may begin at the same point but change and evolve over the course of a lesson. I think that learning should have an 'openness' that doesn't inhibit or restrict learners from achieving what they want to from lessons. To that end, I have utilised the success criteria format as a kind of differentiated checklist for students which is introduced at varying points in the three lessons. I have found that by providing students with an idea of how to achieve the objectives, they come to a realisation of the skills they need to complete tasks. The challenge provides them with a vehicle to explore the parameters of their learning without the 'glass ceiling' of a framework such as 'must, should and could.' I should reiterate however, that both the timing and the implementation of the success criteria are adaptable. There is scope to avoid revealing the criteria until the end and as part of the mid-reflection asking students to write a sentence that shows what they feel they have achieved thus far. Alternatively, you could show them at intervals throughout the lesson and identify where they think they have met the success criteria and how they might advance to the next one.

On a final structural issue, you will notice a consistent opportunity to reflect on learning and review findings. Although, I by no means believe Ofsted should dictate the manner with which lessons are devised, their focus on progression does emphasise the need to monitor the learning taking place. I also believe it offers an opportunity to support learners through a dialogue with both the teacher and their peers. Obviously, there will be on-going reflection in connection with tasks, but you will be able to gauge the development of students' ideas of the 'bigger picture' by connecting factors and placing the surveys in a larger context.

Schemes of learning should engage and develop lines of enquiry and the strength of this particular resource is that it attempts to do just that. Students consider both the micro and the macro aspects of history, investigating the experiences of the questioners and the questioned and assessing the ramifications at national level. Moreover, students have the opportunity to handle original documents and the datasets that collate the findings of the surveyors. Overall, the lessons provide students with the vehicle from which to analyse the cultural and social elements of Britain in the first half of the twentieth century through examination of valuable historical documents.